HARRY LAUDER : AT HOME AND ON TOUR

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Harry Lauder : at home and on tour

Harry Lauder

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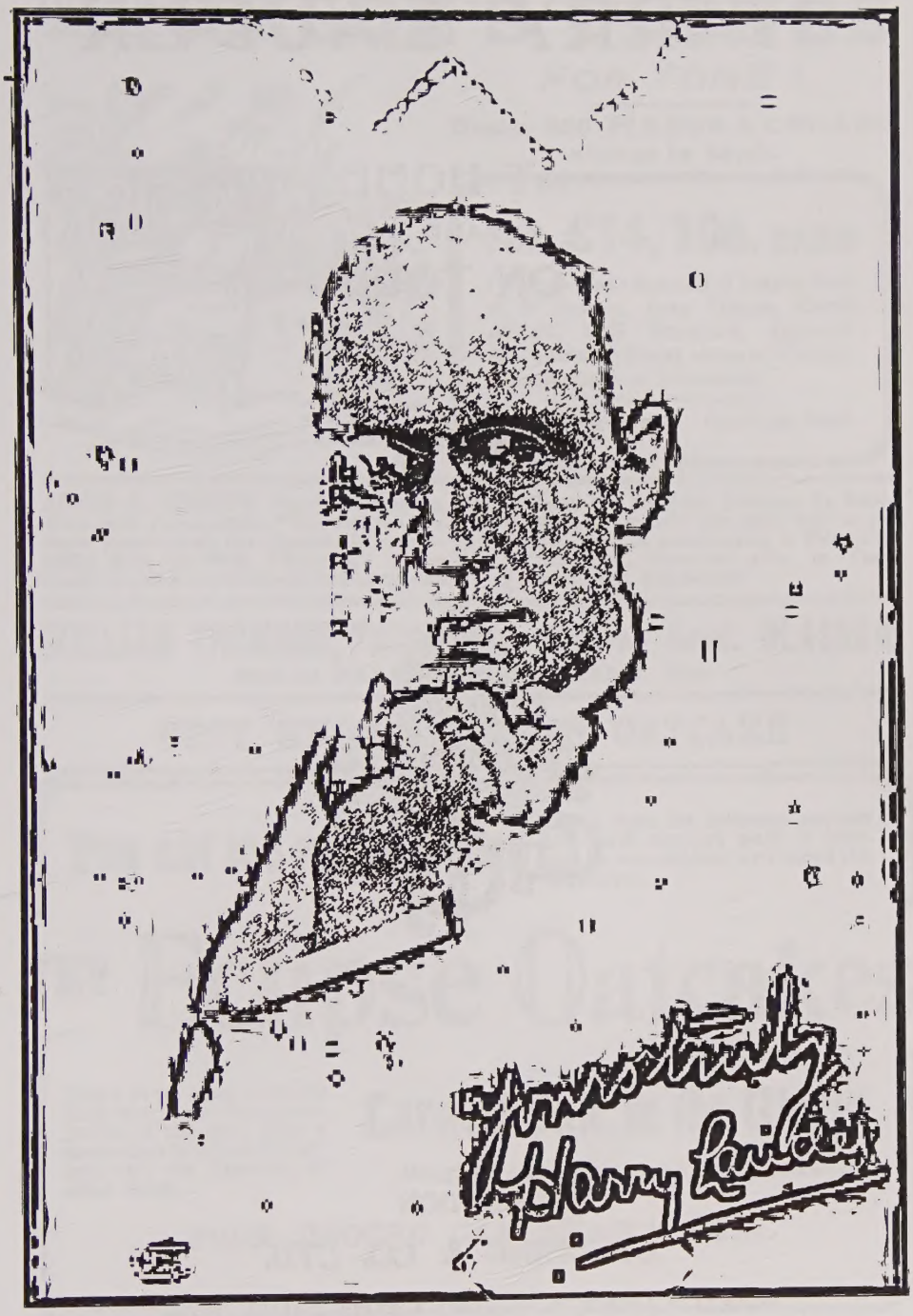

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"KEEP YOUR EYE ON PAISLEY"

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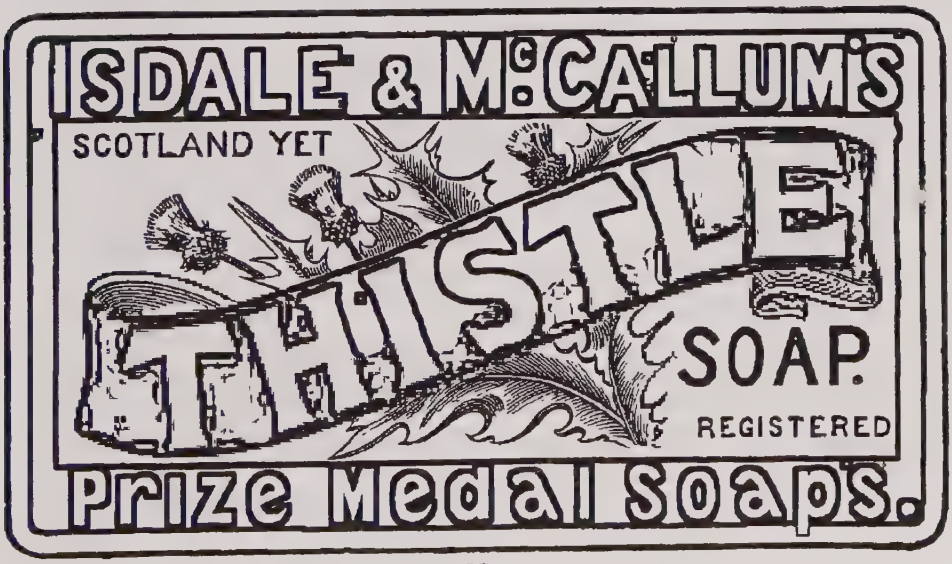

LAUDER: The Artiste and the Man

By W. BLACKWOOD

THE king who reigns amid the love and admiration of his subjects requires no formal introduction to the people who bestow upon him their devoted homage. Harry Lauder is in many respects just such a monarch, for he wields in his own sphere a sceptre not less potent than that of the proudest sovereign. No need, then, to introduce in conventional style—Mr Harry Lauder! He has introduced himself to the people of these islands in the most effective way—he has reached their hearts and their homes, and has won for himself a secure and full place in the affections of the combined nations. King of melody and mirth, Harry Lauder reigns supreme!

Some people can read romance in everything a degree removed from the commonplace, but in the story of Harry Lauder's life unfolded in these pages there is very little of the romantic as the word is generally understood. Here indeed, there is always more of fight than of favour, a deal more of pluck than of luck. Certainly Lauder's genius was ever-present, making fame and fortune possible to him, but how many geniuses succumb in the struggle, lacking the essential quality of determination, and die, unknown and unsung? Harry Lauder is, I repeat, a genius, but he has nursed and fostered his natural endowments until to-day he is hailed wherever he goes as the outstanding figure in the profession which he adorns.

And that profession rests under a debt of gratitude to Harry Lauder. For he has raised its tone—and, correspondingly, its status—as few artistes have succeeded in doing. The music-hall stage of to-day would be even more generally popular were there more Harry Lauders. The only difficulty is that they either do not exist or hide their lights under the proverbial bushel! Wherein lies Lauder's wonderful power over the hearts of his public? It would be difficult to answer the question and I will not attempt it here. His genius is too subtle to be located and described in a word or two; his unique gifts are too elusive to be grouped and explained in a few lines of type. He is Harry Lauder—and that is enough for most of us!

In private life Mr Lauder is quite as entertaining to his personal friends as he is to the thousands who know him only "from the front." Genial, warm-hearted, unassuming to the point of sheer modesty, and detesting "form" and fuss of every kind, he is at once the best of good fellows and the staunchest of friends. I have spent many happy hours in Lauder's company, but none so truly enjoyable as those during which I fulfilled the duties of mentor in things literary to the most popular comedian on the British stage.

WM. BLACKWOOD.

GLASGOW, 1*st Dec.* 1906.

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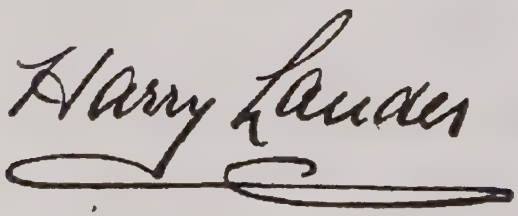
To a' Ma Freens :—

I've been speer'd sae mony questions aboot masel' an' ma business within the past year or twa that I made up my mind some time ago to do "a very terrible desperate deed," as the General said to me efter I had cut the enemies' legs aff. The result o' this desperate deed is noo in yer hands. Dinna blame me; blame them that drove me to it.

If ye only kent hoo mony cauld cloots I've had roond ma heid since I started, wi' the help o' ma freen Blackwood, to write the havers in this book, ye wad tak' peety on me an' buy a dizzen copies jist to help a strugglin' author. And it has been a struggle—mair than likely it'll be the same to you.

But, jokin' aside, I've tel't ye everything that I can think o'—unless, maybe, hoo much money I've got in the bank, an' hoo much I'm owin'—and wi' these exceptions ye noo ken as much aboot Harry Lauder as he kens himsel'. There's only yin wha thinks she kens mair than either you or me, an' that's the wife. But she doesna!

If ye're no pleased wi' this first attempt o' mine I'll never write anither book, mind I'm tellin' ye. And even if ye are pleased I'll never write anither. Sae ye maun jist mak' the best o't!



To my Fellow-Artistes
of the
Music Hall and
Theatrical Profession,
among whom
I number many of my
Warmest Friends,
I Respectfully Dedicate this
Little Volume.

H. L.

HARRY LAUDER

(BY MA'SEL')

CHAPTER I

FIRST "TURN"

How other chaps feel when they sit down to take their lives—I mean write them—I don't know, but at this moment I feel just about the most unhappy man on the face o' the earth. In fact I feel so queer that I would welcome anything or anybody—even suppose he came to borrow money—so long as I could find the slightest excuse for delaying once more my first attempt at authorship.

P.S.—Since writing the above I have eagerly waited a full hour listening for a knock at the door, and have smoked six pipefuls of thick black to soothe my nerves. But nobody has come to cheer me up! Perhaps my friends have got to know that I am writing a book and have decided to leave me to my awful fate.

I wish Sandy M'Snuff, the man wi' the big nose, was at my side just now. You see, Sandy and me are auld cronies, and I whispered to him, one day last week, that I was proposing to write up my life, as the newspaper men put it "Weel, Harry," says he, "tak' my advice an' begin at the beginnin'; dinna

start half way through or lead aff at the finish." If Sandy had been here he might have been able to tell me exactly what he meant. But in any case I think I'll take the first part of his advice and commence at the beginning, which, after all, is the proper starting-point, be it a race, a good dinner, or a story. So here goes!

My first appearance on any stage—this is absolutely original !—took place in a wee house in Portobello before an admiring audience of two, both of whom were paid for their presence. The stage, I need scarcely add, was the stage of life, and the audience consisted of a nurse and the village doctor. For reasons which I think will be fairly obvious, I have not included my mother amongst those "in front." Later the "house" was augmented by the arrival of my father, who, I have been informed, expressed great satisfaction with the last "turn." The date of this appearance I am quite unable to vouch for personally, but I have my mother's word that it happened on 4th August 1870, somewhere about half-past five in the morning. The wag-at-the-wa' may have been a few minutes wrong either way, but in any case I was always an early riser.

"A gey row ye kickit up," my mother often remarked to me afterwards; "the neighbours across the street heard ye roarin', an' cam' ower tae ask if ye was twins." At this early period of my professional career I must have been a double-voiced vocalist.

John Lauder, my father, was a native of Edinburgh, and my mother was a MacLennan of the Black Isle,

Ross-shire. So that I am Scotch to the back-bone, as the phrase has it, a true native of the land whose chief characteristics are generally supposed to be mountain and flood, "parritch" and kail, whisky and "soor-dook." I have even heard it whispered that my paternal ancestors were direct descendants of Lauder o' the Bass Rock, home of the solan goose and silver gull.

If it is true that my forefathers lived on such a rock, I hardly think they could have been respectable. Take it from me they were there for no good purpose, and the more I see of that gaunt, grim sentinel of the Firth of Forth, the more am I convinced that these Lauders of bygone times were pirates purely and simply. It is the only occupation which I can figure out as having been possible to them under the circumstances. But as a boy I was very fond of wandering down to the sea-shore, looking for hours at the fascinating rock, and reviling the stern fate which had delayed my birth for hundreds of years and prevented me from being born the son of a pirate king.

On these expeditions I lived for the most part on cockles, amplified at rare and joyful times with a bawbee worth of broken biscuits purchased from a little shop not far from the beach. The cockles were delectable fare; but their after-results were frequently painful, and doubly so when my mother took it into her head to give me a thrashing for my prolonged absence.

One of my earliest recollections of these rambles by the sad sea waves is of taking along with me

another little chap who knew not the glories of cockle-devouring. After eating as many as we could we collected a fair booty in our handkerchiefs and were making our way homewards across the links when a number of golfers came up and demanded to know what we had in the "hankies."

"Only cockles!" said I, timidly.

"Look here, boy," replied one of the golfers, "we're all starving and we'll buy your cockles for a sixpence. Is it a bargain?"

He didn't need to ask twice. We passed over the bundles. I collared the sixpence—being the elder boy of the two, and stronger in a scrimmage—and away we ran over the links for fear the golfers would repent their bargain. Neither my companion nor I had ever had so much money in our lives, so to celebrate a highly-profitable transaction we regaled ourselves on hokey-pokey, lemonade and biscuits, spent the rest of the day at Fisher-row and the remainder of the sixpence on admission to a ghost-show in the evening. I got home about ten o'clock to find my father waiting for me with the "tawse." And he didn't forget to use them either, I'm telling you! My father was one of those men who believed that if a thing was worth doing it was worth doing well. He was a sore and tearful Harry that fell asleep that evening. What happened to my colleague in the day's adventures I never found out—he kept religiously out of my way ever afterwards, probably acting under strong parental injunctions.

When my mother's washing-day came round I had

to act as nurse to my younger brother, a job I thoroughly detested, considering it lowering to my dignity. As a rule I was confined to the house on these days, but I remember being once allowed to wheel my brother in the " pram " up the Haugh and " doon the Windy-Wind " at Musselburgh. On the road I fell in with several other daring spirits of my own age and there was wild joy amongst the crowd when one of our number reported the discovery of a wasp's " bike." With great gusto we started to dig the wasps out, but it never occurred to me to remove the " pram " containing my baby brother out of the danger zone.

The result was that when the angry wasps sallied out in force to defend their homestead and became distinctly threatening, we cleared out at the double and I regret to say that the law of self-preservation applied so strongly in my case that I forgot all about my helpless brother in the perambulator. His agonised screams made me turn back in spite of the buzzing about my ears, and I returned in time to flick a dozen wasps or thereby from his face. He was very badly stung, and my mother called me a coward for leaving him to his fate. But to prove to her that I was not such a coward after all, I set my teeth and never " grat " during the inevitable " letherin' " which terminated the day's outing.

I seemed to be doomed to get into scrapes of one kind or another; in fact, I never was out of them. About this time my father was rather well known as a successful trainer of professional and amateur foot-runners, and one of his " lads " had carried off

a big event at the famous Powderhall grounds in Edinburgh.

Subsequently an adjournment was made to our house in Musselburgh, where my parents had made arrangements for a little supper in view of the prospective victory. "We youngsters" were packed off to bed very early to be out of the way, a proceeding very much against the grain so far as I was concerned, especially as I had followed, with keen interest, the culinary labours of my mother for the approaching feast. These included an enormous currant dumpling, the very spectacle of which, on being extracted from the big iron goblet, made my eyes glisten and my mouth water. To be put to bed with such a dumpling in the house! Why, it was rank cruelty to children! So I lay awake for hours listening to the revelry in the next room and joining in fancy the attack upon the currant dumpling.

It must have been very late, for I could scarcely keep my eyes open any longer, and was just "doverin' ower" when the room door opened and I saw the dim figure of my mother bearing on an ashet in front of her the dumpling—at least what remained of it. The sleep went off me in an instant. Immediately my mother "steekit" the door on the other side I was out of bed and very soon outside, so to speak, the remainder of the dumpling.

I had a shrewd suspicion at the time that I was eating more than my fair share, but I crawled back to bed in an exceedingly happy frame of mind and speedily was in the land of dreams. And such

"I LOVE A LASSIE," OR "MY SCOTCH BLUEBELL"

appalling dreams! I remember waking with a terrible shriek and a corresponding pain in my nether regions. My father was not easily roused from slumber—especially after celebrating a Powderhall victory—but he jumped out of bed and ran for the doctor. The verdict of the latter was "castor-ile!"

Next day I got two prime thrashings—one for theft and the other for what my father described as "downright gluttony." From that day to this I have not cared much for currant dumplings!

I would be about ten or eleven years of age when I got my first "job." It was to pick strawberries for a market gardener whose ground was not far away from our house. One of the conditions laid down was that the boys employed in the strawberry beds should "whussle" all the time they were at work—obviously a contemptible dodge for getting behind the biblical instruction which forbids the muzzling of the ox that treadeth out the corn.

"Can ye whussle, Harry?" said the gardener to me when I asked for a job.

"No, sir, I canna whussle—I never learned," was my reply, and it was truthful—more or less.

"Are ye an honest boy?" was his next question.

"Yes, sir, very honest," says I.

Now the gardener had no earthly right to engage a boy to pick strawberries who couldn't whistle, and the natural result was that before the day was far spent I collapsed—too few strawberries in Harry's basket and too many elsewhere! I was ill for three

days, at the end of which time I went boldly up to the gardener and demanded my pay for the day I had been in his employment.

"Wages for stealin' my berries!" exclaimed the man, in a towering passion. "I'll gie ye the polis-office, ye young rascal!"

I meekly suggested that I hadn't stolen his berries, I had only eaten them.

"Well," was the reply, "ye'll eat nae mair here; ye're sacked."

So I left. And that was the end of my first job!

Afterwards a local cartwright engaged me to be his message boy and general assistant. My master kept a big fat pig in a "crae" at the foot of his yard, and I was so much interested in this pig that I could scarcely keep away from it. The cartwright himself was exceedingly fond of his pig, and his eyes beamed with joy when I told him, in answer to his query, that it was the "biggest, fattest and most beautifullest pig I had ever seen."

"Well, Harry, ye'll get feedin' it," he remarked, watching eagerly to see the effect which this glorious piece of information would have upon me. It coincided with my own ardent desires.

Before leaving work that night I emptied a huge pailful of slops into the pig's trough, and after stroking its hairy sides in the most loving fashion, I left the yard for home. But a terrible accident happened. In the morning the pig was dead—choked to death with a lump of half-cooked plum-duff which had found its way into the slops! I was

blamed for killing the pig, although I protested my innocence with tears and every manifestation of grief at "Tommy's" untoward demise. It was no good. The cartwright gave me the sack. So again I left!!

CHAPTER II

AS A "HALF-TIMER"

TRADE being very dull at home my father left Musselburgh for Whittington Moor, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, in 1881, and some time afterwards we joined him there. But our stay in Derbyshire was very brief, for my father was taken ill and died at the early age of thirty-two, leaving my mother with seven of a family. Fortunately, we had relatives who were willing to assist us, and my mother removed with her children to Arbroath, where her father and family resided. Many happy years I spent in the old Forfarshire town, and I look back with pleasure on joyful hours among the Auld Abbey Ruins, by the rugged sea-shore, along the cliffs, or on the common.

I went to work as a "half-timer" in Gordon's flax-mill, earning the handsome wage of two shillings a week. The boy or girl employed as a half-timer works one day and attends school the next. Our schoolmaster was "Stumpie" Bell, and the school-house was an auld kirk in the Applegate. The dominie was called "Stumpie" by reason of an affection of one of his limbs which caused him to stump badly when he walked. He was quite a character in his way, and was a very good though

somewhat severe schoolmaster. We boys were fond of playing pranks on him and nothing delighted us more than to see "Stumpie" in a rage. For me he had a very pronounced dislike, probably because I was generally a ringleader in any trouble which arose among the scholars. Many a trouncing he gave me, and once he lost his temper to such an extent as to scream at the pitch of his voice, "Harry Lauder, you're a d——d rascal!" I have no doubt whatever that he was correct.

One day a travelling circus gave an entertainment on the common, and several of the boys, including myself, deemed this an event which certainly justified our playing truant from school. Next day we had to work in the mill, but on the following morning we bravely stepped into the schoolroom, having previously made it up that if "Stumpie" laid a finger on one of the truants all the others should rush out to his rescue. There was a glitter in the dominie's eye that morning which boded no good for some of us, and he stumped round his desk more vigorously than we had ever seen him hitherto. Personally, I felt fascinated with the gleam in his eye, and my courage gradually sank into my boots. Right enough the blow fell on me.

"Harry Lauder!" yelled "Stumpie" after prayers, "come out here!"

Tremblingly I advanced to the master's chair, at the same time looking round covertly for the agreed-upon rally which would rescue me from "Maister Bell's" wrath. But there was absolutely not a movement; the truants who were so brave outside

were now as tame as mice. Alone and unprotected I had to go "through it," and when "Stumpie" was finished with me that morning I didn't know whether I was standing, sitting, or lying down. As a matter of fact, sitting was out of the question! Dear old "Stumpie!" He is now an angel with golden wings.

I was very keen to earn more money than the two shillings a week, which was the half-timer's handsome wage, for the income of the family was exceedingly small, and I therefore made strenuous efforts to get a job as a full-timer. I used to go round the mills telling the foremen that I was fourteen years of age, and more than once I was "taken on." But I would only be working for a day or two when the Factory Inspector would come along and discover me, and then I was packed back to half-time. Frequently I hid away among the flax when the Inspector made his appearance, but if I escaped detection then it was only to be found out soon afterwards.

It was when I was a wee mill-boy in Arbroath that I sang my first song in public. How can I ever forget that memorable occasion? Even as a child I was very musically inclined—at least I was so to the extent of having a fine clear voice and liking to hear myself sing. A travelling concert company had booked the Oddfellows' Hall, and part of their programme was a song competition for amateurs. The prize was a goldless—I mean a keyless watch, and at the close of the contest I was the proud possessor of that watch, which I still possess and would

"RISIN' EARLY IN THE MORNIN'"

not sell for a thousand times its value. There was a certain appropriateness in the words of the song I sang that night, for indeed I was no stranger to poverty at this particular time. Here was the chorus of the first-prize effort:—

"Tho' poverty daily looks in at my door,
Tho' I'm hungry and footsore and ill,
I can look the whole world in the face, and can say,
Though poor I'm a gentleman still!"

My success in this competition raised me to the position of a hero amongst the mill-boys in Arbroath, and I was so conceited with myself that I began to have visions of earning unheard-of money as an operatic star of the first magnitude.

"Ye'll hae five pounds a week afore ye dee, Harry," said one of my companions to me.

The very thought of such vast wealth almost made me faint. Not long afterwards there was another competition for youthful amateurs in the same hall and under the same circumstances. Of course I entered. The prize on this occasion was a six-bladed knife—I remember the number of blades for I counted them fully ten thousand times in two days—and with the same song I lifted the prize. Probably I would have kept the knife had I not, some time previously, become an inveterate smoker. As it was, I sold my prize in a few days for threepence—a small sum, certainly, but representing the price of an ounce of "thick black," or Bogie roll, as we call it in Scotland.

This bartering of my prize recalls an episode over

which I frequently laugh to this day. My mother was naturally very angry when she discovered that I had learned to smoke, and was eternally keeping her eye on me to prevent me indulging in the habit. One Sunday afternoon I said to her that I would like to go for a walk along the cliffs.

"It's no a walk ye're wantin', Harry Lauder," says she, "it's a smoke. I ken ye! But ye'll no get smokin' if I can help it. A bairn like you smokin'! I'll smoke ye!"—and so forth.

The result was that she told my brother Matt to put on his cap, walk out the cliffs with me, and on our return report to her if I had been smoking.

Matt and I went off together. Right enough, I took out my pipe and had little difficulty in inducing Matt to have a "draw." Then I told him that he should learn to chew tobacco, as he would never be a man till he did so. Matt was not at all keen about the chewing, but latterly he followed my example and inserted a real "cairter's quid." In two minutes he was as white as a ghost and started to—well, you remember how it affected yourself to begin with! It was then that I said to the helpless Matt, "Noo, my lad, if you tell on me, I'll tell on you!"

He looked into my face with an expression of the utmost misery and wailed, "Oh, Harry, tak' me hame! I'll no clype a word."

"Ye'll better no," said I. "I'll tell mither we were in sweemin' an' that you swallowed a lot o' saut watter." The ruse worked all right!

"Mony a ploy" I had in these happy days at Arbroath. I was a great bird-nester and had a fine

collection of eggs. To begin with I had no qualms as to how I added to my collection, and would have "harried" any nest I came across in the most unthinking and ruthless fashion. But my mother taught me a very useful lesson. There is a pretty extensive "thicket" on the outskirts of Arbroath known as the Magunzie Wood, and here we boys were wont to proceed on our nesting expeditions. The wood was a favourite resort with different varieties of birds. One evening I was on the prowl alone when I came upon a full nest of young mavises. Here was a prize! So home I carried the whole nest in triumph! When my mother knew what I had done she read me a very severe lecture on the sin I had committed and finished up by saying, "Ye wad steal the puir buirdies, ye rascal! But back ye gang tae the wid this nicht an' pit the nest in the spot ye found it. Hoo wad you like tae be steal't, Harry Lauder?" I realised that I had done wrong and carefully carried the nest back to "the Magunzie."

In addition to being an ornithologist I kept pet rabbits and bred and "troked" them as though I had been a stockmaster. Rabbit-dealers, like "doggy" men, are not the most scrupulously honest of individuals, either as boys or as grown-up enthusiasts, and I still remember vividly a rather dirty trick I played on another boy of about my own age. On my invitation he came round to our back-yard to see my rabbit-hutch, and expressed great delight with my collection of rabbits. One huge Russian rabbit of which I was the proud possessor—

" a rale beauty," with soft " lugs " and eyes of fiery red—particularly took his fancy, and after vehemently asserting that all the money in Arbroath would not make me part with this rabbit, I added that, of course, if he was very anxious to buy it, the price would be as near two bob as he could muster.

I don't know what sort of boy my " victim " could have been, but he actually raised the objection that the rabbit had too long hair. With its size, ears, colour of eyes, etc., he was charmed, but the length of its coat was an insuperable bar. As there was no use arguing with a boy who didn't know the value of long hair in a Russian rabbit, I simply replied that he " needna fash himsel'," for untold gold would not prevail on me to part with it. Two days later I sold the rabbit to the same boy for " eichteenpence," but it had not long hair, and he was quite pleased to accept my statement that the weird-looking animal I handed out from beneath my jacket was a Mexican hare brought over by a seafaring uncle. In a week or two the hair all grew again, and the boy demanded his money back—he said he had been swindled. Such a horrible imputation could only lead to one thing. I challenged him to mortal combat there and then, and had the satisfaction of vindicating my honour by a glorious victory.

I will only tell you one more of my Arbroath escapades. It is stamped vividly on my mind because of the narrow escape I had of being either killed or very seriously injured. There was an old man who lived in a " wee thackit hoose " close by the ruins of the old Abbey. He earned his living by

breaking sticks and selling the bunches to the surrounding householders. His premises were a favourite resort of many of the town's boys, and nothing pleased us better than to assist him to chop the wood. In one corner of the "yaird" was a little boiler which generated steam for driving a circular saw. One evening the old man left us in charge while he went up to town on business, and one of the instructions he left to us was that we should "fire up the biler." We were as diligent in "firing up" as we were careless of the water arrangements, and a minute after I had been peremptorily called home by messenger from my mother "tae gang to the Sosh", the boiler burst. One of my companions—I forget his name now—was killed on the spot, and two others, Bob Hannah and Johnnie Yeamans, were so severely scalded and otherwise injured that they were confined to the house for weeks. As my mother used to say, when referring to my narrow escape at this time, "Things are aye mixed wi' mercy."

CHAPTER III

MEN AND MANNERS IN THE MINE

Our stay in Arbroath only extended to two years. My Uncle Sandy was resident in the West of Scotland, and he wrote to my mother advising her to come through to Hamilton as work was plentiful and her boys would be sure of securing employment at better wages than they could ever hope to make in the flax-mills. So after a great deal of anxious consideration

"JE-EH-EH-EH-ERRY-ERRY-CO!"

my mother decided to pack up and remove to Hamilton. Soon after our arrival there I got a job as a pit-head boy. I thought everything around me was black and uninviting after the picturesque green fields, the towering cliffs and the rolling sea at Arbroath, but I soon became accustomed to the change and the idea of earning more money for the household strongly appealed to me.

It was with a light heart and any amount of determination that I began work at the pit-heads. After a few weeks here I got a chance to go below and work " at the face " with a miner who promised to pay me ten shillings a week as his assistant. My first trip below the surface was to me a fearsome but thrilling experience, and I held my breath as we went down, down, down, further and further away from the sunshine and the world into the regions of blackness and silence. The flicker from the gauze-lamp which I tremblingly carried only blinded my eyes. I seemed to be struggling for breath, and every moment I expected the grim damp walls and the narrow roofs of the roadways to collapse and bury us for ever. But the stern reality of hard work soon knocked all such thoughts out of me, and in less than half an hour I was sweating like a navvy in the " stoop " at which my " gaffer " was employed. That week seemed a very long one, and at the finish it proved a very sad one to me, for the miner lifted all the pay and cleared out without giving me anything for my work. Hard lines, wasn't it?

On the following Monday I got a start on my own as a " trapper." The duties of a trapper are to open

and close the air-course doors as the pony driver with his hutches goes in and out. He is supposed to do nothing else and never to leave the doors on any pretext whatever. But it is only supposition, for the pony drivers contrive to make the trappers do a good deal of their work, and they are not as a rule backward in meeting a refusal with a bang on the jaw or a hearty kick. Many a time I sampled both courtesies.

Still, we were a happy family in Eddlewood Colliery, and many a jovial gathering we had in our little cabin at the top of the "cowsy" brae, when we met to replenish our lamps with oil, or, at "piece-time," to eat our bread-and-cheese and drink our flasks of half-cold tea. One gets to know one's fellowmen better in the mine than almost anywhere else, and I had not been a miner long until I began to note the different kinds of humanity alongside of which I was employed. There were socialists among us—men who were never tired of declaring that the coal they worked belonged to themselves and to the country, and that a day was coming when private ownership of the minerals of the earth would cease to be. I often used to wonder, on listening to long and heated harangues of the socialist, what he would do in the event of someone gifting him a coal-mine to himself. Would he forthwith pass it over to the country? Not half! as the saying has it.

Then we had more than one preacher—good men and quiet, men who never swore at the trappers or pony drivers, and generally were an example to everybody in behaviour and industry. Of course,

the politician was not absent, and though I was too young to take much interest in politics I can well remember listening to arguments, ay, and speeches, on political questions which would not have disgraced Parliament itself.

In the mine we also had the humourist, the man who was always happy and jocular, the vocalist, never loth to break the monotony of, or lend variety to, the "cabin" gatherings with a lilt of some kind or another, and even the "elocutionist," or at all events the man who knew a few lines of poetry and was not afraid to spin them out for the entertainment of his mates. Many of the miners had heard me singing to myself as I stood or sat beside the air-course doors, and the result was that I was often called upon to contribute to the impromptu programmes in the wee cabin.

"Gie's a bit sang, Harry," they would urge, and I, though timid at first, soon overcame my bashfulness, rewarded as I was with many a pipeful of tobacco. My *répertoire* in these days was limited to one or two of the popular choruses of the period, but I sang the words with all the energy and "style" that I could put into them.

We had quite a number of worthies in our pit. There was one big fellow who had been a bit of a rolling stone in his day, and who was the most outrageous boaster that ever I heard. The word boaster is generally another name for liar. Well, this chap could tell lies which would have turned Louis de Rougemont green with envy. Some of his twisters—"adventures" he called 'em—almost

turned the miners sick. One day, when we were all seated at our bread-and-cheese, he began to tell us a story about his experiences in the Wild West of America—in the American Bush as he termed it.

"I thocht the Bush was in Australia, Dick," quietly said an elderly miner, with a sly wink to the others.

"Awa, man,. it's the Rocky Mountains ye're thinkin' aboot. They're in Australia, right enough, for I've often clamb them. But, as I was sayin' "—and he proceeded to tell us of the desperate life he had led among the wild men of the Woolly West. "Tell you what it was, chaps!" he concluded, "ye had aye tae hae yer pistol in yer haun' and mak' sure o' gettin' in the first shot."

With some of the "safter" miners Dick was a hero and they used to sit and listen to his stories "wi' lugs like saucers." But this yarn about the pistols fairly stiffened me and, feigning excessive wonderment and admiration, I asked how many men he had actually killed.

"Well, Harry," he replied, scratching his head and trying to look as devil-may-care as possible, "I couldna' tell hoo mony I laid oot, but I've seen me kill half a dizzen atween breakfast an' denner! At ither times I've seen me gaun a hale day an' no killin' yin!" Then the bell rang to begin work!

Dick's fairy tales got on my nerves somehow, so I resolved to play him a trick and test his prodigious bravery. Telling several of the miners what I proposed to do, in order that the fun of the thing should not be missed, I did not join the usual crowd at piece-time next day, but hurried along to the

" face " at which Dick was working alone. I had brought down with me in the morning an old bed-sheet and a false-face with phosphorus eyes, and just before the man-killer was due to return I had everything fixed up for giving him a start. Keeping back the feeble rays of my lamp by crouching behind a heap of loose coal till Dick was close upon me, I then slowly rose to my feet, at the same time uttering some weird and gurgling sounds. Dick gave a sudden gasp of horror, staggered back so suddenly that his lamp went out, gave vent to a loud shriek and scurried along the damp " stoop " as fast as he could feel his uneven way. In a state of complete collapse he fell into the arms of those in the know who had been eagerly waiting to see the result of my prank. In the excitement I easily made my way, undetected, back to the stable. Dick refused to work any more in " the haunted seam," and that night, as we were all collected at the foot of the shaft waiting to be run up, he was full of the " terrible fight he had had with a ghost which rose out of the coal and tried to strangle him."

" Man," said I, " you should ha' hid yer pistol wi' ye an' shot him," following up the remark with a repetition of the sounds which I had emitted in my character of " spectre of the mine."

The boys could not help it; they laughed like to kill themselves, while I " juked " a blow which was aimed at my head by the surprised and humiliated Richard. He got a job in another mine next day. But we missed his " ghosters " at piece-time!

By-and-by I got on as pony driver, the change

"THE LAST O' THE SANDIES"

bringing me a few extra shillings of wages. For about three years I drove the "hutches" to and from the pit-shaft, and during that time I handled quite a number of nice wee Shetland "pownies." Your pit pony is a lovable little animal, and though he gets more kicks than kind words from some of the drivers, he is a very willing and faithful worker. Woe betide him if he wasn't! Personally, I was always good to my "sheltie," made a chum of him, as it were, and I never saw the pony yet that I could not manage more by kindness than by blows. For, mind you, the pit ponies of Lanarkshire can be dour, soor, stubborn Scots when they like, especially if you try to give them more than their share of work. They know as well as their drivers when they are asked to tackle too big a "rake."

I once had a sweet wee pony called "Captain." Standing about eleven hands high he was the finest little fellow ever I saw "doon the dook." Everybody liked him and I loved him. I taught him all sorts of tricks, and I verily believe that if I had had him long enough I could have taught him to speak. He could tell by scratching his fore-foot on the ground how often he had been at the "face" for loads, and no watch was necessary, with "Captain" as a companion, to know when "lowsin' time" had arrived.

He could steal, too, thanks to my training, and it was a source of endless amusement to some of the younger men to see me give "Captain" permission to go on a foraging expedition. He would trot into the little cabin and extract from the jackets hanging

there the bread-and-cheese which had been left over at piece-time. Then he would seize a flask containing tea—passing over all the empty ones—put it between his fore-hoofs and pull out the cork with his teeth. This done it was a simple matter for him to raise the flask above his head and drink its contents. If "Captain" heard a strange step approaching he was out of the cabin like a shot and off to his corn-bin or his yoke of hutches. He was "a droll yin" and no mistake!

Once "wee Captain" saved my life. We were going towards the coal face with a rake of empty hutches and had to pass a "drift"—an old working road that has fallen in and been cut through. It was a very wild-looking chasm of twenty-five or thirty feet wide, and I always shuddered when I passed through it. On this occasion "Captain" stopped suddenly just as we were about to enter the drift. I did not know what was wrong with him and shouted to him to "gee-up." But he would not stir a step. I then gave him a blow with my whip for his capers, but his answer was to turn sharply round and look in my face with a reproachful expression in his eyes. At that very moment the drift in front of us closed with a tremendous crash. "Captain's" instinct had told him that something was going to happen; his acute ears had heard warning sounds which to mine were quite unintelligible. When I realised what had taken place the tears came to my eyes. I threw my arms round "wee Captain's" neck and kissed and cuddled him again and again. He appreciated my gratitude and forgave me that

unmerited blow. If he were alive now he wouldn't be drawing hutches in a coal mine!

As I have hinted we had all sorts and conditions of men in the mine. At the moment I remember one fellow in particular from whom we used to get a deal of amusement. He was an illiterate; in fact, he could neither read nor write, but was exceedingly fond of sitting on his "hunkers" at the corner of the street every night listening to some of the boys reading the evening papers aloud. Next day in the pit he would tell us that he had read such-and-such in the *Times* or *News* and lay off the tale with any amount of gusto and personal comments thereon. But he frequently got mixed up in his reports, and more frequently still he sent us into fits of laughter by some ludicrous phrase or wrong word.

One day he was telling us about the execution of a murderer and finished up by saying, "Poor devil, he had an awfu' end, but he got jist what he deserved —the pendulum o' the law!" This same chap went to the doctor one night to have his "latest" vaccinated, but he either did not know the correct word or forgot it in his excitement, and horrified the medical man by remarking, "We've jist come roon', doctor, tae see if ye wad 'ssassinate this wean o' oors." "Wull" and his wife invited a miner chum to tea on a Sunday afternoon. The visitor was making heavy "delves" at the butter, of which there was not very much on the plate. This rather annoyed "Wull," who suddenly broke in with, "Here, you, ca' canny wi' the butter, man. It's the best an' I want a dad for ma piece the morn! But stick in at onything else ye see!"

The guid-wife was fair ashamed of her husband. "Never mind oor Wull," she ejaculated, "he jist opens his moo' an' says whatever he means!" The visitor did not remain long in the house, but his subsequent description of "Wull" and his wife as "a glaikit pair" was scarcely deserved, for a kinder-hearted couple dwelt not in Lanarkshire.

CHAPTER IV

MY ASTRACHAN COAT

DURING my first few years in the mine I had to work so hard for my mother and the family that I did very little singing. But when Matt. and my other brothers grew up and were able to go below, I began to compete at concerts and to sing at soirees. My rewards at the former were an occasional medal or money prize, while the soiree promoters deemed their "talent" well paid with "a cup o' tea an' a cookie."

I was a proud youth the night that I received my first fee for singing at a concert. That fee was only five shillings, but I could not have thought more of it had it been five pounds. After singing my songs at this concert one of the other artistes advised me to try the Glasgow Harmonic Competition, assuring me that I would be "dead certain of a prize." Accordingly I entered the contest in Glasgow and was lucky enough to be among the medals. This was in 1892. The song I sang that night was entitled "Tooralladdie." It was rather a ridiculous

song, but I was dressed up to the character, and my rendering of it evoked peals of laughter. Here was the chorus:—

"Twig auld Tooralladdie,
Don't he look immense!
His watch and chain are no his ain,
His claes cost eichteenpence;
Wi' cuffs an' collar shabby,
O' mashers he's the daddy;
Hats aff, stand aside, an' let
Past Tooralladdie."

On returning to the mine on Monday morning I was quite a hero and was congratulated on all hands, so much so that I really began to have swelled head and to build golden castles in the air. That evening I went home full of a great resolve.

"Nance," said I to my wife—I should have told you that I was married some weeks previously—"I'm going to chuck the mine an' go in for the stage! My mind's made up!"

Like the good lass that she always was, and is, my wife discussed the matter in all its bearings with me, but seeing that I was set on the project she said she would put no obstacles in my way. "Please yersel', Harry," was her final dictum.

Accordingly I kept my eye on the "concert" advertisements and replied to every likely "ad." that I saw there. After many days back came an answer from the manager of a concert party about to set out on a Scottish tour. An interview was arranged and the result was that I was engaged as "comic" for a fourteen-weeks' tour at the enormous

"SHE'S MA DAISY"

salary of thirty-five shillings a week. I could have "louped" with joy, but had to restrain my feelings in presence of the manager. Hurrying home to Hamilton I hugged my wife till she must have thought that I had gone mad, and then executed a war-dance on the kitchen floor. Thirty-five shillings a week was a big advance on the fifteen shillings which was about the most that the poor miners were allowed by the masters to earn at that time.

So off I set on the appointed day, light of heart and feeling that I was on the high road to fame and fortune—another Dick Whittington! My duties on this tour, which started at Beith in Ayrshire—the home of the Scottish cabinet-making industry—were of a very numerous character. I was baggage man, bill inspector, stage carpenter, check taker and lion comique all in one. Yet the work was congenial and, "though I say it as should na'," that concert party could not have got a more conscientious young man to fill the combined posts. Immediately on arriving in any town where we were billed for an entertainment my first duty was to see the baggage safely removed to the hall. Then I set out with a huge pile of leaflets drawing attention to the "unprecedented attractions" of the evening's concert, and these I had to distribute from house to house, at the various shops in the main thoroughfares, or at the gates of public works, etc.

The afternoon was devoted to the "fit-up" at the hall, and after tea I had to hasten back and "check" the sixpenny part of the house. This done I had to prepare for my share in a three-part programme,

generally singing six songs a night, and more if the audience demanded it.

To me that first professional tour was an altogether delightful experience. What bliss it was to be out all day in the fresh air and the sunshine instead of hewing coal in the dark depths of the mine; what a sigh of relief I heaved every morning at five o'clock when I wakened—out of sheer habit—remembered that I had no work to go to, and turned over for another glorious snooze; what a real pleasure it was to the young miner to flit from place to place and see more of his native land in two days than he would otherwise have done in two years! I was heartily sorry when the tour ended, but I had twelve pounds in my pocket on leaving for home, and this money I proudly placed in my wife's "lap." She was very glad to see me, and thought that I had suddenly become a millionaire.

Another engagement was waiting me on my return, but it was only for one night, and the fee was almost as much as I had been getting "on tour" for a week—a guinea and a half. But I snapped at it as usual and felt quite charmed at the thought that engagements were now "flowing in" of their own accord. After this week, however, the flow ceased, the tide began to ebb, and "the rocks" appeared ahead. I was in despair. I waited eagerly for a few days to see what the "postie" would bring, but he religiously passed our house, and I could have punched his head when I noted the cool, unconcerned manner in which he delivered letters to everybody but "Harry Lauder, Comedian."

Rather than eat the bread of idleness—and, incidentally, encroach on these twelve precious pounds—I resolved to return to the pit, so, donning my greasy clothes, I set off to the pit-heads and had no difficulty in getting a start.

There was many a quiet laugh amongst my old comrades at my expense, and more than once I heard the sneering remark, "stickit comic," or an observation to the effect that I had "got the conceit knocked oot o' me, an' was gled tae tak up the pick again."

"All right," said I to myself, "conceit or no conceit, I've twelve pounds in ma stockin', an' that's mair than a dizzen o' ye hae atween ye." And I cheerfully hewed away for several weeks. Then suddenly I received a letter from the late J. C. Macdonald—of "Sandy Saft-Awee" fame—asking me to call at his house and see him. I was at Mac's door in Glasgow next morning before he was out of bed. He offered me an engagement for the New Year week at Greenock Town Hall, ten performances, salary three pounds. Was I booked, or could I take the job? I took it almost before "J. C." had finished speaking! That night I actually went out and purchased astrachan for my coat collar!

It seemed to me that nothing less than astrachan was becoming on the coat of an artiste making three pounds a week. The wife sewed it on with a quiet smile on her face, and there wasn't a prouder wee comic in Britain than Harry Lauder when he strolled into the dressing-room at Greenock Town Hall for his first show of the week. I can only remember two of the songs I sang during the week, but I

recollect that I was fairly successful and got lots of encores. One of the songs was "All for the Sake of Mary," which had the following extraordinary chorus:—

"I'll hang myself on the mortal spot,
All for the sake o' Mary;
Choke masel' wi' a five-pound note,
All for the sake o' Mary
I never will laugh, I never will cry,
Never pay thru'pence for a tup'nny pie,
This very nicht I'm goin' tae dye
Ma' hair for the sake o' Mary."

This song I sang, of course, in the character of a simple love-lorn loon. The other was a female character song called "The Bonny wee Man." One of the verses with chorus went something like this:—

"There was a wee man cam' coortin' me,
A tailor was he ca'd Tammy M'Phee,
An' oh! but he was a treat tae see,
Was the chappie that cam' tae woo me.
He lookit sae handsome, what dae ye think,
His een were black an' blue an' pink,
I'm tellin' ye he was nae sma' drink,
Was the chappie that cam' tae woo me.

Oh, but he was a fly wee man,
A sly wee man and a shy wee man,
A regular greasy, citrate magnesia
Chappie that cam' tae woo me!"

I enjoyed that New Year week in rainy Greenock, and would have been quite happy had I known that there was another engagement to follow. But there wasn't. And for the second time I went back to the coal face, having first of all stowed away in a box

below the bed my astrachan coat! "You'll come in handy yet," I remarked, as I lovingly folded it past; and I was a true prophet, for in a very short time, thanks to the influence of Mr J. C. Macdonald, I was given a six-weeks' tour by Messrs Moss & Thornton. This time I said farewell to the pit for good, determined either to succeed as an artiste or tackle some other job.

I started at Newcastle, went on to South Shields, then to West Hartlepool and Sunderland, finishing up with a couple of weeks at the old Scotia and Gaiety Halls, Glasgow. To tell the truth this tour was a heart-breaking business, for I was either first or last on all the programmes, and many a night, when occupying the latter position, I came out and sang my three songs to an audience consisting of the orchestra—minus the conductor—the checkers, and the backs of people hurrying as fast as they could from the building.

I'll never forget my first appearance at the old Scotia in Glasgow. I had just come on and was "doing the walk round" when a man in the gallery shouted out, "Awa' back tae the pit, man!" I felt a lump—half rage, half mortification—rise in my throat, but I went on and finished the best way I could. They weren't afraid to speak their minds, the patrons of the dear old Scotia, and they quickly let an artiste know when they had had enough of him. More than once that week I think they had enough of me, at all events that was the doleful impression left on my mind as I sorrowfully crept to the dressing-room.

"CALLIGAN, CALL AGAIN"

A second tour under the same auspices was more successful from my point of view. I got more money—four pounds a week, an increase of ten shillings—a better place on the bill, and considerably more applause than I had previously received. Things were indeed looking up, but though I was naturally of a buoyant disposition I could not see just then that I could ever get beyond an occasional Moss & Thornton tour and a salary at the very limit of five pounds a week. Of course there was the concert platform as an adjunct to my music-hall work, and I did my utmost to form a good connection in this line.

CHAPTER V

EARLY "CONCERT" DAYS

I LOOK back with genuine pleasure to these "concert" days of mine, and often when I am glancing over my "future-dates" book and find that I have scarcely a week to myself for many years to come, I cannot help thinking that the struggling uncertainty of the old times had a charm all its own. Every other "job" that came in made me feel a full inch taller, and I remember with what pride and satisfaction I completed the first week in which I had been engaged in a different place every evening

So successful had I become as a concert comedian that I felt justified in raising my terms, and though on the first occasion that I point-blank refused the offer of a guinea I could have kicked myself immediately afterwards, I persevered in my decision

and refused to accept work unless on my "revised terms."

Mention of this recalls to me an incident that happened at a rather big concert arranged by a Musical Society in a town not a hundred miles from Glasgow. The artistes booked for that occasion consisted of a soprano, a contralto, a tenor and a basso, with myself as comedian. The ladies and the tenor were very frank and affable when I entered the ante-room, but the basso stared superciliously at me, and his glance developed into positive disgust when he saw me proceed to make-up for one of my female characters.

"You can please yourselves," he all at once remarked to the ladies and the tenor, "but I don't appear on the platform to-night! I'm an artiste and value my professional reputation too highly to appear alongside a vulgar comic-singer."

His friends tried to soothe him down, but it was no good. Latterly the secretary came into the ante-room and was plumply and plainly told by the offended basso that a choice would have to be made between sacrificing his name on the programme or that of "the supposed comic person in the petticoats."

I was so amused at the whole affair that I went quietly on with my preparations, but I made up my mind that if the secretary prevented me from singing I would have something to say—and probably do—to the "artiste" before I left the building. However, the secretary refused to decide between us, contenting himself with imploring Mr R—— to fulfil his part of the programme

"Never!" ejaculated the sensitive basso, putting on his coat, dramatically rolling up his music, and stalking indignantly from the room. The concert was a great success without him, and I had to respond to half a dozen encores. Mr R——, I should add, soon afterwards became a chorister in a third-class opera company, and only a week or two ago he "touched" me for two shillings in a London side-street.

In the autumn of 1896 I joined Mr Donald Munro's North Concert Party and toured all over the north and midlands of Scotland. Miss Jessie Maclachlan, the famous Scottish prima donna, and Mr Mackenzie Murdoch, most brilliant of Scottish violinists, were of the party, and its success was so marked that Murdoch and I put our heads together and resolved to take out a party ourselves next season. There was money in the concert tour, we said to ourselves, and we could as well make it for our own pockets as assist to earn it for others.

So we made all our arrangements, mapping out a tour of several weeks' duration, and having bills printed drawing the attention of all whom it might concern to the fact that the "Murdoch-Lauder Combination" was on the road and would present a programme of positively unrivalled excellence. These bills were distributed in Kilmarnock, Kilwinning, Irvine, Troon, Ayr, etc., by the concert promoters in person, "Mac" and I going on to the towns ourselves a few days ahead and handing over a bill to every shopkeeper that would agree to display one.

Our first tour, I regret to say, was a distinct failure. I thought everybody knew Harry Lauder, the eminent comedian, and Mackenzie-Murdoch was certain that everybody would be anxious to hear him play the fiddle. We were both sadly mistaken! The tour resulted in a loss of £150. But were we downhearted? No! Out we went again next autumn, scoring off the towns in which we had done bad business the previous year and breaking fresh ground where we thought it would prove fruitful.

This tour was very gratifying financially and "Mac" and I banked fully £100 apiece at the end of twelve weeks. Here and there, of course, we lost money, and at one or two of the smaller towns we visited our experiences were positively ludicrous. Just imagine a full concert party, lavishly "billed" for a week previously, going through its programme before an audience of eleven—all in the sixpenny seats, and six of them youngsters at half-price, to say nothing of the billposter and his wife, who got in "on the nod"! Yet this is what actually happened to us on the third or fourth evening of the tour—a black and ominous outlook! No wonder that Harry Lauder was in little mood for laughter-making and that Murdoch's violin "shakes" were not all in the music! But things improved very much as we went on and, as I have said, we grossed a fair round sum over all.

Mackenzie Murdoch and I cemented a friendship during these jolly concert tours which has never been broken. I have heard many violinists in my time, but I think that "Mac" stands unequalled as an interpreter of Scottish music on the violin. When practising in our lodgings—we always lived together

where possible—he often seemed to me to become suddenly possessed with the Spirit of Music, and melody would come sweeping from the strings of his fiddle which filled me with exquisite delight or weird awe according to the humour of the player. When Murdoch took up his fiddle in the privacy of our lodgings he could make me sing for very joy, dance because I could not keep the " divil " out o' my heels, or greet when I was sad.

You couldn't have found a happier pair of irresponsibles than " Mac " and I in these days had you searched the whole countryside. We were always up to some prank or another. A favourite wheeze of mine, when we were living in any hotel throughout the country, was to wait until all the guests were seated at breakfast, dinner or tea, as the case might be, and then begin to sing, or rather mutter, in a low rhythmical tone, the following words:—

" And the old cow crossed the road,
The old cow crossed the road,
And the reason why it crossed the road
Was to get to the other side ! "

I would keep time with one foot on the floor and preserve an expression of the utmost gravity in spite of the surprised looks on the faces of the strangers round the table. By-and-by " Mac " would start keeping time along with me, and then perhaps another member of our company would chime in with the humming and beating. The usual result of this nonsense was that very soon the whole table would be either droning out the silly words or vigorously

"HEY! DONAL', HO! DONAL'"

keeping time with feet on the floor. A broad smile would be on every face and a wild outburst of laughter certain to ensue before the farce had gone much further.

It happened at times, of course, that our musical efforts were not appreciated, and I remember once—in " Thrums " I think it was—we played the prank on a choleric old English traveller who was the only other person at table besides the members of our company. When I started the adventures of the old cow he glanced inquiringly across the table, and kept looking at me until I could scarcely keep the solemnity which is essential for the real success of the joke. " Mac " came to my assistance all right and in a minute or so there were four of us droning and foot-thumping as hard as we could go at it.

All of a sudden the old chap jumped to his feet, gave an " uncanny " look round the diners and fled precipitately from the room. I verily believe he took us for some escaped lunatics, but the yells of laughter which followed him into the hall probably made him realise that he had been made the victim of a very harmless practical joke. To give him his due I must add that he turned up at the tea-table and assisted whole-heartedly in " taking a rise " out of several newcomers.

It was on one of the early tours of Murdoch and Lauder that the principals learned to " whack the gutty." We had given a very successful concert at Montrose, and next morning after breakfast we discovered a couple of golf balls lying in a corner of the " digs."

"What dae ye say tae a game, 'Mac'?" suggested I.

"Mac" replied that "he wasna' a very good player." I was more honest and admitted that I could not play at all.

However, the landlady came in, and hearing of our project, she remarked, "Hoots! lads, a'body plays gowff nooadays. I'll gie ye some o' oor Jamie's clubs an' ye can step doon tae the links in twa-three meenits."

So off we set, each no doubt mentally wondering what sort of show the other would make. When we arrived at the links we strolled up to the first "tee" we saw and laid down our implements. Murdoch wanted me to play the first shot, but I said, "No, 'Mac,' ye're a better player than me an' you'll get the honour." Judging by the expression in my companion's face I could see that he did not value the "honour" very highly. However, he agreed to begin.

"Now, Harry," says he, "watch where this ba' lichts. Stand back."

I jumped aside lively, and it was well that I did so, for "Mac" forthwith began to swing his club in the most desperate fashion. He cleft the air with a vicious swipe and I kept staring ahead to see in what direction the ball had flown.

"I never saw it, 'Mac'!" I exclaimed, turning round in his direction

"No," he replied with a forced smile, "I—well, I sort o' missed ma swing that time. Here's the ball over on my right."

And sure enough the puir wee ba' was lying half a

dozen yards from the tee with a big black gash in its bonny white side.

"That's a shot!" said I, promptly, as I noticed that "Mac" was about to lift the ball for another attack from the tee, and I carefully piled up three handfuls of sand for my own first attempt. It seemed to me that the more sand you used the better chance you had of hitting the ball! That attempt was far more disastrous than my opponent's, for I broke my club, filled "Mac's" eyes with sand, and moved the ball fully six inches.

"That's a shot, hang you!" yelled "Mac," with his knuckles in his eyes and laughing in spite of the pain.

"Ay," said I, after finding that he was not maimed for life, and winking slyly at my opponent, "I—well, I sort o' missed ma swing that time!"

"You took jolly good care not to miss me, anyhow!" growled "Mac," and then we proceeded with a game which was neither close nor exciting, but which would have afforded excruciating mirth to the most ignorant caddie in the world.

We took fully a hundred strokes each for the nine holes, but duffers as we were we could not help thinking that some of the holes were very close to each other. When we went home in the afternoon and told the landlady where we had started she began to laugh. We had been playing on the ladies' course!

One way or another Murdoch and I had many amusing and exciting adventures together. At Castle Douglas, one of the many pretty little towns in the Galloway district, the landlord of the hotel in which we were living asked if we were fishers,

because if so we could have a fine day's fishing in a neighbouring loch. I looked inquiringly at "Mac" and asked him if he was as good a fisher as he was a golfer.

"Scarcely so good!" replied he, smiling.

"Well," says I, "we'll catch something, for I'm a don wi' a rod!"

My observation was not strictly accurate, for I do not remember up till this time of ever having had one in my hand. But the chance of a good outing was not to be lost, and in an hour or less we were out in a boat on a very picturesque loch. The fish, however, seemed to have all fed—and fled—for the day; at all events we didn't get even the suspicion of a bite, and by-and-by we sat down in the boat and began to tell stories of the enormous catches we had had elsewhere—before we knew each other. The boat latterly drifted in amongst weed and long grass at the far end of the loch, and in an endeavour to push the craft free we lost an oar. As we would have been helpless minus this oar I tried to "rake it in" by means of my fishing-rod, but the rod broke and I fell head foremost into the loch. The water was not deep, but the weed and grass closed in on me like an octopus and I had to struggle desperately to get on my feet. Even then all that I showed above water was my shoulders and head. A pretty spectacle I must have looked standing splashing among that infernal weed!

"Save me, 'Mac'!" I cried, more in earnest than in joke, it must be confessed, but the boat had been pushed ten or twelve feet away when I fell out, and

its solitary occupant was experiencing the utmost difficulty in controlling its movements with one oar.

"Look here, Harry," shouted "Mac," after a desperate and futile effort to accomplish my rescue, "you'll no droon there, and seein' ye're in the water ye may as well wide ower and collar the loose oar."

I managed to do so, and after some more exciting work I clambered over the side of the boat. Naturally we did no more "fishing" that day. On our way home to the hotel we struck a crowd of boys playing football, and the football struck "Mac" on the nose, which at once started to bleed diligently. Full of anger and with his shirt front covered with gore Murdoch gave chase to the footballers while I stood and shivered under a tree on the roadside. I saw him catch one of the youngsters and administer a very decided cuff in the ear. This escapade very nearly got us into trouble, for the boy's father came up to the hall in the evening and threatened us with all the pains and penalties of the law. He was easily mollified with a shilling and a free seat, and he "clapped" the loudest of all the audience that night!

CHAPTER VI

I BECOME A POACHER

NEXT day we passed on to Newton Stewart and "Mac" and I secured capital lodgings in a house which had a big fruit garden attached. It was a lovely autumn afternoon and we were seated at tea with the window open listening to the singing of the

"I'M THE SAFTEST O' THE FAMILY"

birds in the pear and apple trees close at hand. "By Jove, it's good to be alive!" exclaimed "Mac" in the fulness of his heart as he finished putting jam on a big biscuit. The landlady's daughter began to sing, "O' a' the Airts the Wind can Blaw," in the next room, and just at that minute the wind blew in a big wasp which made a "bee" line for the jam biscuit in Murdoch's hand. He instantly dropped the biscuit, and this so enraged the wasp that it stung "Mac" on the little finger. He uttered a loud yell; the girl in the next room stopped singing; the birds flew away from the trees, and I jumped up to lend any assistance in my power. Unfortunately in doing so I upset the tea-pot on my friend's legs and then there was general pandemonium all round.

"Good Heavens! am I to be killed alive?" screamed Murdoch, as he danced about the room holding his injured finger, while I followed up "sousing" his legs with the contents of the cream-jug to counteract the effects of the boiling tea. My attentions in this direction did not seem to meet with the sympathy which they deserved, and when the alarmed landlady and her daughter entered the room they were treated to the extraordinary spectacle of two men chasing each other round the table, the one yelling like a madman and the other seriously holding an empty cream-jug in his hand and imploring the pursued to say whether or not he was "better noo."

"Better!" gasped Murdoch, as he sank breathlessly into a chair. "Ye've spoiled a new fifteen-an'-six pair o' troosers!"

Our violinist was not able to play at the concert in the evening nor for several days afterwards, the stung finger swelling badly and causing him a lot of pain. For long afterwards, when I wanted to tease Murdoch, I had just to say to him, "Hoo's yer 'pinkie,' 'Mac'?"

This trip of ours through "grey Galloway" was full of incident now that I look back upon it, but for the matter of that every concert tour I made in Scotland had its amusing or adventurous aspects. After leaving Newton Stewart we gave a concert at Creetown, a quiet little spot in Wigtownshire. As Sunday intervened between our next engagement all the company resolved to spend the week-end at Creetown and see a bit of the moorland country on the Sunday. Mackenzie Murdoch and I managed to see more of it than at one time seemed good for us.

After the concert we were introduced by one of the townsfolk to a man who offered to provide us with "some fun on Sawbath nicht." We had no idea what sort of fun was in store for us, but seeing that it was to be dished up on Sunday evening we imagined that it could not be anything very boisterous and willingly agreed to place ourselves under the stranger's commands. Sure enough, he turned up at our lodgings as the gloamin' began to throw its shadows, accompanied by two dogs—a greyhound and a lurcher—and was dressed in a dark suit with a slouch hat on his head.

He was a brawny chap and a fine-looking, but there was a queer shiftiness in his "wee, peery een"

which I didn't like. Yet he spoke intelligently and freely, and as we went along the old cart road near the station he discoursed eloquently on the glories of Galloway. We were inclined to agree with most that he said in this respect, for the evening was beautiful and the last rays of the setting sun had bathed the hills to the west in a gold and purple grandeur. The scenery on every side was superb.

By the time we reached the moorlands at the base of the hills the light had failed and darkness was fast settling down. The plaintive cry of the whaup was the only sound that broke the stillness, save our voices as we conversed together. All at once our guide whispered something to his dogs and they disappeared amongst the heather like the proverbial greased-lightning. We now saw that the dogs had been brought out for other purposes than to get an airing, and realised the nature of the "fun" which we had been promised.

"Mac" and I got very excited and bestowed lavish praise on the dogs as they came up every now and then with a rabbit or a hare firmly grasped in their frothy jaws.

"Man, 'Mac,' but this is gran' sport," said I, the fever of the "chase" welling within my heart. "It must be fine to own a moor like this, an' guns an' dogs—an' keepers," I added as an afterthought.

"Ay, there's lots o' keepers here," put in our friend, "an' stern devils they are, tae!"

"Mac" gave an involuntary start; so did I.

"What's that licht across the moor there?" I asked, my heart beginning to thump.

"Oh, that's a keeper's hoose," replied the poacher, for such we now knew him to be. "I expect they'll be takin' a walk round very soon."

I suggested that if this were the case it was time we were taking a walk home as fast as our legs could carry us.

"If anybody comes this way," said I, my teeth chattering as though I had been "dookin'" in the sea on a frosty morning, "I'll break the mile record between here and Creetown."

"Well," remarked the poacher, with a laugh, "ye may be the best runner in the world, but if Adam Broon gets a sicht o' ye he'll gey quick gie ye a chairge o' lead in the seat o' yer troosers."

This information was far from reassuring, and "Mac" had the bad taste to follow up the poacher's remarks with, "Harry, it's a God's blessin' ye didn't put on your kilt this nicht!" We were just preparing to leave the moor when a grim figure rose out of the darkness to our left.

"We're pinched, sure enough!" I whispered to my companion.

"What's the fine for poachin', Harry?" was all he answered, and there we stood clutching each other's arm and waiting for the roar of the gun which we were sure would be instantly employed against us.

"It's a' richt," latterly whispered the poacher. "I ken him, John R——, a decent fermer an' a freen' o' mine!"

Up came the farmer and exchanged greetings with us. He had been out having a stroll through the heather before going to bed. I was so overcome

with joy at discovering he was not a keeper that I gave him my last cigar. He took and lighted it with the remark, "Man, I havena' smoked a cigar since I got my eldest dochter aff my hands. I was that gled tae see her get a man that I didna' gie a d—— what I smoked!"

We all moved away together in the direction of the farm and said good-night to the worthy man at the end of the road leading to his steading. We had no sooner got rid of him than the poacher sent his dogs into one of the farmer's corn-fields.

"There's hares there," he whispered, "and they're sure to come out this gate. You chaps watch and nail the hares as they come oot."

He then disappeared after the dogs. "Mac" armed himself with a couple of huge stones, while I steadied myself for a kick at the first living animal that showed itself. In a few seconds we heard the corn rustle close by, and though it was pretty dark we had no difficulty in seeing a couple of hares make a bound past us. I lunged out with my right foot, missed the hares, of course, and delivered a terrific kick on Murdoch's nearest shin-bone. Simultaneously he let fly one of his stones and it caught me in a very tender spot. We fell together in a heap, using strong language between our groans of agony. I was slowly staggering to my feet when several more hares and rabbits flashed past, followed by the two dogs, but one of the latter collided with me in the "by-gaun" and sent me reeling into a ditch of stagnant water.

"For heaven's sake, let's get hame before we're

"I'VE LOST MA PLUNKER"

killed or pinched," wailed "Mac," hopping around on one leg.

An hour later two very miserable fellows crept secretly into their lodgings in Creetown. Next morning they had hare for breakfast and laughed heartily as they recalled the adventures of the previous night.

When Mackenzie Murdoch and I lodged together on our tours there were generally "wigs on the green" and uproarious fun of one kind or another. Now on this Galloway tour it was remarkable that the first time we were separated I should have taken part in a little drama of the most affecting description. At Gatehouse-of-Fleet in Kirkcudbrightshire circumstances caused me to lodge alone over night with an aged couple who lived in an ivy-bowered cottage not far from the rolling waves of the Solway Firth. I arrived about four o'clock in the afternoon, and, as is usual with me wherever I go, I engaged in a "hamely crack" with the old landlady and her white-haired Darby.

They were a delightful old pair—quiet, pawky and, like all the people in that part of the lowlands, overflowing with kindness to the "stranger within their gates." Here, thought I, was a typical old Scottish couple, spending the evening of their days in peace and comfort, alone, it was true, but probably supported in their frailty by loving sons and daughters scattered over the face of the globe. We were just beginning to get "chief," as we say north of the Border, when the outside door was burst open and five rosy-cheeked children rushed to the old lady's side.

"Gie's a piece, granny," they shouted, "we're awfu' hungry—" and then they noticed me and drew back hesitatingly.

"A piece, ma lambies!" fondly exclaimed "grannie," her eyes glistening as she beheld her young brood, "but ye'll get that; ay, ye'll get that."

And soon the youngsters were despatched, each munching a huge slice of bread and jam.

"Fine bairns these," I remarked, following their movements through the window as they scampered along in the direction of the river.

"Ay," quietly replied the old man, bestowing a secret glance on his wife, who was wiping her eyes with the corner of her apron. Nothing was said for a moment or two, and as I had no desire to probe into the affairs of the old couple I slipped out of the house and went for a walk till tea would be ready. When the children were all in bed that night and the three of us were seated round the kitchen fire, the old lady, with tears trickling down her furrowed cheeks, told me the following story.

"The bairns are no mine, sir, as ye can judge for yersel'. They're oor dochter Lizzie's. She's in service noo at a big hoose some miles frae here; God kens whaur her husband is—he hasna' been heard o' for five years. He was a bit hally-rackit when they were mairried, but he got worse after that and turned out a worthless rake. He was a sailor chap belongin' tae the district, and though the auld man and I never thocht very much o' him we fain believed he wad settle doon if he got a fair chance, so we spent the savin's o' oor life—nearly

twa hunder pounds—in buyin' him a wee coastin' schooner. His first trip was fairly successful, but his second saw the *Rosie* wrecked on the rocks at Gairlieston. This was a great misfortune for us a', but it was nae excuse for the lad refusin' tae work ony mair an' quarterin' himsel' and his wife on the auld folks wha had already gien him everything they had. Things went frae bad tae worse wi' ——, and after a few miserable years for a' concerned the faither there and I were gled tae gie him twenty pounds that we had saved up for a rainy day. Aff he set tae Liverpool, and we've never cas'en eyes on him since. An' yet oor dochter believes in him an' says he'll come back some day. Dae ye see the wee lassie at the far side o' the bed there—her wi' the black hair an' the bonny red cheeks? Well, she was born six months after her faither went awa' an' she's her mother's favourite. Oor's tae, if the truth were telt, for she's jist a wee darlin'. But they're a' gettin' on fine wi' the auld folks, an' though they're a struggle tae feed an' claith the hoose wad be dull an' drear without them! "

In the bedroom where I slept there was an old-fashioned wag-at-the-wa' with a curiously-shaped little china face. It took my fancy, and next morning I offered the old couple a good price for it. They did not want to take what I offered, but I knew that neither of us was being cheated, so I carried off the clock with me when I left a few hours later. It wags awa' in my bedroom to this day, and every time I look at it I wonder if the wandering sailor has ever returned to compensate dear old " granny " at Gatehouse-of-Fleet.

CHAPTER VII

KIRSTY LAMONT'S RENT-BOX

"THAT reminds me" is a very popular remark in hotel smoke-rooms and elsewhere when people get on the vein reminiscent and one story leads to another so naturally when one sits down to write that I find I could go on *ad lib.*—as the great Latin scholars have it—telling yarns about these concert tours of mine. However, I will only relate one or two more incidents in the life of a Scotch comedian on tour in his own country.

I remember being once in an out-of-the-way hamlet in Banffshire to and from which the train service was of the most primitive character. The distance from the nearest main line town was only some twelve or fifteen miles, but "the local express" took the better part of two hours to cover it, stopping leisurely at some half-dozen stations *en route*, and even then making a prolonged stay when the driver or fireman got "on the chaff" with a wayside stationmaster or porter. On the occasion of my visit to —— I was rather anxious when the time came to leave to catch the south-going train at the junction, and as we crawled along I began to be very dubious about doing so. At last I asked a fellow-traveller if the train in which we were seated was booked to catch the connection I wanted.

"O ay," he replied in the broad northern doric, solemnly removing his clay pipe before speaking, "she's bookit richt eneuch but she vera seldom does't."

This was encouraging! We seemed to go slower and slower from this point onwards, and by-and-by the train stopped, with a sort of sleepy jerk, less than a mile from the junction. After squirming in my seat for about ten minutes I got up and opened the window. The signals were down and there was no sign of any block ahead. Latterly I opened the carriage door, jumped on to the line and walked forward to the engine. The driver and fireman were seated on the footboard, the one enjoying a smoke and the other a chew. They expressed no surprise at my appearance; indeed, the engine-driver was polite enough to remark to me that it was "a braw mornin'."

"Yes," replied, I "the morning's all very fine, but what about this bally old train? What has she stopped for?"

"Oh, no much, sir, no much!" responded the driver. "The fact is," he added seriously, "the engine's gane aff the bile!" Just then I heard the whistle of the express as she left the junction for Aberdeen!

Eavesdroppers, they say, never hear any good of themselves. Whether I heard anything to flatter me or not, under the following circumstances, I leave my readers to judge. We had had a very successful concert in Kirriemuir, and next morning on my way to the post-office I heard my name mentioned as I passed a group of women standing gossiping at a "close-mooth." I stepped up to a shop window abutting on the entry and listened to the conversation. One of the women had evidently asked her companions "what they thocht o' Harry

"FOU THE NOO, ABSOLUTELY FOU"

Lauder?" One female, with an enormous waist girth and a pair of terrific arms, bared to the elbow, had taken it upon herself to answer the query.

"What dae I think o' Harry Lauder?" she said in an angry voice. "I'll quick tell ye that, buddies! I think he's played me a dirty trick, the wee deevil, although, to be honest, he's no a' thegither tae blame. It was this wye! Last nicht, fan the lassies cam' in fae the mull, they begood tae fling their workin' things fae them as tho' they were demented. 'Gosh!' said I, 'fat's a the stushie? Ye haena' got a breed, hae ye?'—for they were fair excitit-like. They jist leuch an' said they were hurrying tae see Harry Lauder.

"'An' fa's Harry Lauder fan he's at hame?' said I.

"'Oh,' says they, 'he's the comic fae Glesca; a rale divert, an' he's haudin' a concert in the Toon Hall. Will ye come?'

"'No,' says I, 'I winna, for a' the bawbees in the hoose is needit for the rent—due on Setterday,' says I. 'A bonny thing it wad be for Kirsty Lamont tae gang mashin' at concerts in a rent week! Fat wad the neebers say?'

"'Put on yer bonnet and yer dolman, ma,' says Phem—that's my auldest lassie, ye ken—'an' I'll pey for ye. Come on!'

"Weel, they were that keen-like that I said I wad gang jist tae please them, and in half an 'oor we were leavin' the hoose as John stappit in for's tea. I roor't till 'im that he could jist steer for himself for a nicht as we were awa' tae hear Harry Lauder.

"'D——n Harry Lauder!' says he, gey short-like,

'ye'll be sorry for this nicht's garaverie, leavin' yer man tae mak' his ain tea an' him been workin' hard since six o'clock in the mornin'.' I kind o' turn't at that, for John's a queer ane when he taks it intil's heid, but the lassies poo'd me oot the door and in twa-three meenits we were at the hall. Sic a crushin' and fechtin' tae get in! If it hadna' been for the bobby at the door seein' me—he kens me fine, for I've bail't John oot twice—a guinea ilka time—an' they ocht tae recognise guid customers!—I dinna believe we wad hae gotten inside.

"Well, the concert begood. It was verra nice till Harry Lauder cam' oot in his kilt, an' then, losh, I started tae laugh till the watter ran doon ma cheeks. The lassies were fair affrontit at me, an' I thocht masel' that the hall-keeper wad hae pit me oot. But I couldna' help it! Harry Lauder! The man's no wysse! But faith, he mak's ye laugh wi' yon swing o' his kilt an' his wee back step, ye ken! Weel, as I was sayin', we got hame aboot eleeven o'clock an' the first thing I misses is John! He wisna in the hoose. Kennin' John, I gangs richt tae the 'kist' whaur I had the rent plankit and sure enough there's no a bawbee left! He'll be spendin' it in the Forfar pubs at this meenit an' we'll no see him till he hisna' a copper left! What dae I think o' Harry Lauder? I only wish I wis within half a mile o' him the noo an' I'd tell him what I thocht o' him! He's cost me three months' rent, has Harry Lauder, for if he hadna' been in Kirrie last nicht I wad never hae lifted ma een aff the rent box wi' a man like oor Jock in the hoose."

So many different accounts have been printed of how I first got my nose into London that I believe the true story will not be without interest to my friends there and all over the country. For a long time previously I had been meditating a descent on the "little village," but anyone in the profession to whom I mentioned the project flouted the idea and told me to dismiss it from my mind at once and for all time. There was absolutely no chance for a Scotch comedian in London I was repeatedly told, and I began to think so myself. But a very successful week's engagement at Birkenhead decided me.

At the Mersey town I began my "turn" with a sentimental song, followed with an English comic song, and concluded with "Calligan-Call-Again," the Irish character song which I had just then brought out. All three songs went fairly well, "Calligan" especially. One evening at the close of my ordinary performance the audience would not let me off the stage, and I returned and asked if they would like "a little Scotch."

"I'll hae a drap o' Glenlivet, Harry," yelled a compatriot in the stalls, and the whole house roared with laughter.

Well, I came out and sang "Tobermory" with such success that I had again to return and give them "The Lass o' Killiecrankie." These songs had to be put on my list every evening thereafter till the close of my engagement. I was engaged at a very much increased salary for a return visit next year, but the immediate few weeks following I was "out," so I resolved on the strength of my Birkenhead

success to go up to London there "to do or die." If I got an opening, I argued, I would surely take as well in London as I had done in Birkenhead, and if I were a failure, well, I would be an exception to the rule so far as Scots in London were concerned. In any case I could always be tolerably certain of earning my bread and margarine elsewhere.

Still, the London hall-mark was a great thing in a comedian's career, and so impressed was I with the importance of this first visit to London that I think I remember every step I took from the station to my agent's office and every feeling of alternate hope and despair that possessed me during my first few hours in London. I arrived on Monday morning, 19th March 1900, and, as I have hinted, went direct to the agent in whose hands I had left my provincial booking. The agent was very courteous, but to my inquiries regarding the chances of a "shop" in London he shook his head and smiled sardonically.

"No good, Harry, my boy!" he remarked, "Scotch comics are not wanted here—no manager would take you on, and if he did his audiences would howl you down. Go back to the kail-yaird, where you're at least understood!"

This interview was scarcely refreshing, to put it mildly, and Lauder's face fell very much as he listened to the dogmatic conclusions of the all-wise agent. Next morning I was introduced to Mr Walter F. Munroe, who promised to introduce me to several of the managers, and away we went, there and then, on a round of the music-hall offices. But, alas! nobody seemed to require—far less desire—

the services of the wandering Scot, and my heart was in the region of my boots when we dropped into a restaurant in the Strand.

"Hello!" said Munroe, "here's Mr Tom Tinsley, the manager of Gatti's in Westminster Bridge Road; we'll have a last go!"

Walter introduced me to Mr Tinsley and we all sat down together. The manager of Gatti's was very genial until he learned that I was looking for an opening.

"What line of business?" asked he.

"Scotch comedian," said I.

"Stop!" exclaimed Tinsley, "that's done it! Don't be angry with me, my dear—what's your name? Lauder is it?—but I really couldn't risk it. We've had some Scotch comedians before in London, and —well, they're no good to us."

I suggested that he had never heard me and that it was too bad to judge a man in this off-hand fashion. But I could easily see that Mr Tinsley was not at all keen. However, to cut a long story short, he asked me to look down to his office at half-past four that day and he would see if there was an opening of any description. I gladly agreed to the appointment and turned up prompt to the minute.

"You're in luck, Scottie!" were the first words he uttered on seeing me. "I'm a turn short to-night, and if you bring down your "props" about ten o'clock you can have a show. But remember what I told you—if you catch on you'll be the first of your kidney to do it in London."

"Leave that part of the business to me, sir," I

"THE REASON WHY I WEAR THE KILT"

replied. "I've knocked 'em in the provinces and it'll be Queer Street if I don't get a hand in London."

I was at Gatti's long before ten o'clock, eagerly yet nervously waiting my number—Mr Extra Turn. Beyond the fact that I sang "Tobermory," "Calligan" and "The Lass o' Killiecrankie," and that I had the greatest difficulty in getting off the stage, so many were the recalls I got, I remember very little about my first performance in London. The stage seemed to be going round and round, while for all I knew the house might have been empty, but I threw my whole heart into my work, and on getting to the dressing-room I nearly collapsed through sheer nervousness and fatigue.

Mr Tinsley came to me in a few minutes with the remark,—

"Lauder, my lad, you've done it!" and I took a somewhat different meaning from the phrase than had been intended earlier in the day.

He engaged me for the rest of the week straight away, and from that date to this I have never been long out of London. In a few days the managers of the big West-End halls were after me with contract forms and extended engagements were entered into between them and myself. I had almost forgotten to tell you of a conversation I overheard between two costers on leaving Gatti's after my first show there.

First Coster—"Say, Bill, wot d'yer fink o' that ere Scotch bloke?"

Second Coster—"Blow me if I twigged 'arf he said, Jim. But, lu'mi! ain't he funny!"

I always look back on the coster's compliment that night as one of the best I have ever had paid me.

What can I say about the happy times I have spent in London? It is now my home, and if I ever leave it 'twill be with heart-felt regret. London, I cannot help believing, likes Harry Lauder; certainly Harry Lauder likes London—with an occasional trip to the auld clachans ayont the Tweed!

I have had quite a number of amusing experiences of one kind or another in "the village." I had only been there a week or two when I got lost in a dense fog in the Holborn district. Try as I might I could not find my way down to the Strand, and I was in despair when a big six-footer of a policeman loomed up on my lee bow.

"Here, ma chiel," cried I, "can ye pit me on the road for the Strand?"

He peered down in my face and burst out laughing.

"Has onything come owre ye?" I asked sarcastically, not at all divining the reason for what I considered his ill-timed merriment.

He only laughed the louder. Thinking that the fog had had some evil effect on the official brain I tried to jump out of his way, but he seized me with a leg-of-mutton fist and again peered into my face.

"Look here," said I, now somewhat alarmed, "you've got the wrong man, I'm no the chap you're lookin' for!"

"Are ye no?" says he. "You're Harry Lauder, I'll bet my boots!" A "big" bet in all truth! "Fancy meetin' you here! The last time I saw ye was in New Cumnock—see a shak' o' yer haund."

And he nearly shook the arm off me! I told him where I was singing and gave him a "bob" to come and see me. After he had stowed away the "white" he remarked, "Now, could ye no gie's a free pass?" I did give him a pass—the pass-by!

Another time I was "discovered" in Petticoat Lane. I had gone down to see the sights one Sunday morning after I had become quite a favourite in the East-End Halls, and was standing watching a young Jew selling old clothes from a barrow. I never dreamt that I would be recognised, but another Jew, carrying a pair of trousers over his arm, came forward, slapped me on the back and cried out, "Ach, Mister Lauder, and how vas you to-day? There's not a kilt in de lane or you would have it for nodings!" In a twinkling thirty or forty men and women of all ages and nationalities were round me, shouting at the top of their voices, "The Lass o' Killiecrankie." I managed to make good my escape, but not before I had been subjected to some very boisterous attentions at the hands of my East-End admirers.

Speaking of my good friends the Hebrews reminds me of a little incident that happened one evening at the "London," Shoreditch. I was just leaving the stage door after a terrific reception from the East-Enders and literally fighting my way to my brougham through a crowd of enthusiastic admirers, when a young man elbowed his way to the front and clutched hold of me by the hand.

"Half-time, my lad!" says I. "I'm late for the 'Pav'; let me get off!"

"All right, 'Arry," remarked the young fellow, now working my arm up and down like a pump handle, "I vas so glad to see you doin' vell! You're a countryman of mine own—I vas proud of you!"

As I jumped into my car I asked him to what country we both had the honour to belong, and he shouted out with a typical Jewish waggle of his hands, "Vy! I'm from de Gorbals—(in Glasgow)—Scotland for ever!"

Another time I was collared on leaving a hall by a rather shabby specimen whose red nose and blotched face bore eloquent testimony to the source of his downfall. He hailed me jovially in unmistakable English accents and prefaced a request for "the lend of the loan of twopence" by claiming nationality with me.

"You a Scotsman!" said I, "no fear! If you had been a Scot you'd have asked a tanner!" He got exactly what he did ask, and I left him apparently reflecting on the fourpence he had lost through his ignorance of Scotch character as laughingly expounded by me.

CHAPTER VIII

MY "THOROUGHBREDS"

ONE of my earliest hits on the variety stage in London was the burlesque song, "The Man they left Behind." Many of my friends staunchly hold to the opinion that this has been one of my most successful "studies," and certainly I have been

requested over and over again to revive "The Man they left Behind." I may do so some day. But there was one particular circumstance which helped greatly to make the song the success that it proved at the London Pavilion four or five years ago. I refer to the gallant steed that did duty with me during the run of the song. Londoners will probably remember that steed! I do, most distinctly, and even yet I often smile when I think of poor old "Scraggy."

On resolving to put on the song at the Pavilion I had to cast about for a horse of some kind or another, and I dropped a note to a Lambeth horse-dealer, with whom I was acquainted, asking him if he had anything in his stables which would suit my purpose. He replied that he had several "choice lots" from which I could make a selection, and next morning I went down to the stables. It turned out that my friend the horse-dealer had only one "choice lot" available, and as I intended putting on the song that same night I asked him to let me have a look at the horse.

"He's not much to look at, 'Arry," said the dealer, apologetically, "but he's the real harticle for a comic song—an' I suppose t's wot you want 'im for!"

"All right," says I, "let's see him—he'll surely do for one night at anyrate! Lead on, Macduff!"

We adjourned from the courtyard, and in the far corner of the stable I was shown what I was told was a horse! I burst out laughing the instant I saw him. He was "the real harticle" right enough! He was a mere rickle of bones, was standing leaning

"STOP YER TICKLIN', JOCK!"

motionless against the side of his stall, and his head hung down until his nose almost touched the cobbles.

"Is he a deid yin?" I asked, thinking that the horse-dealer was playing a trick on me.

"Lor' luv' me no, 'Arry, 'e ain't dead—but I don't know 'ow soon 'e'll die. If 'e only stands up 'e'll do you a treat!"

There was no time to look elsewhere for an animal concerning whose ability to "stand up" there would be less dubiety, so it was arranged that "Scraggy" —as I dubbed him from the outset—should be sent up to the Pavilion that night.

If the song was a success, "Scraggy" was a triumph! I had him rigged up with cricket leg-pads on his fore feet, a "moo-poke" was tied to his tail and an old bit of Axminster matting did service for a saddle. There were shrieks of laughter in the wings as my valet and I put the finishing touches on his accoutrements, but the mirth here was a mere detail compared to the wild outburst among the audience when I "galloped" on to the stage. I felt such a supreme contempt for poor old "Scraggy" that I never dreamt of trouble, and probably my entry would have passed off all right had not someone in the wings "prodded" my steed with some sharp instrument as he lumbered on to the stage. "Scraggy" made one spring forward, then stopped dead, and I went shooting over his head like a stone from a catapult. Luckily I was not hurt and scrambled to my feet amid terrific yells from the audience, who thought the whole episode had been carefully prepared.

"Do it again, Harry!" cried a voice from the gallery.

"No," said I, rubbing my funny-bone, "I only dae that wance a nicht!"

Well, that initial plunge of "Scraggy's" seemed to have taken the last half ounce of energy out of him, for he stood like a wooden horse ever afterwards. No matter how I slashed my sword, no matter how loudly the orchestra played, and no matter how I pranced and danced about the stage, he never so much as moved an eyelid. Had I searched the four kingdoms I couldn't have secured a more suitable horse for my purpose, and certainly not one whose mere outward appearance would have afforded greater merriment to an audience. When mounting him at the finish of my song I had to use the utmost caution, for he was so weak and emaciated that it was as much as he could do to prevent collapsing every time I made to get on to his back.

"Scraggy" became quite famous by reason of his nightly appearance at the Pavilion, and crowds of people always waited at the stage door to see his arrival and departure. Early in the evenings it was a common sight to see a gaunt, melancholy-looking quadruped being led through the principal West-End streets followed by a crowd of men and boys. Had a stranger asked what the "procession" was all about he would have learned that it was only "'Arry Laudah's 'oss on it's way to the Pav."

One evening "Scraggy" slipped and fell in Piccadilly Circus, and as he was tired he refused to get up. It required the united efforts of ten police-

men, aided by as many civilians, to lift him to his feet. Half an hour later he meekly carried me on to the stage, and the laughter that night was even louder than usual by reason of the very palpable evidence which "Scraggy" bore on his rickety sides of having been in close contact with the muddy streets of London. Some time after my engagement at the Pavilion was finished poor old "Scraggy" was found lying dead in his Lambeth stable. The "excitement" of a stage life had been too much for him! The applause had killed him! his success was his ruin!

My next experience with a stage horse was at Edinburgh, on the Moss & Thornton tour. It was of a vastly different character. "The Man they left Behind" was my most popular song at that time, and, of course, I had to include it in my *répertoire* during that visit to Scotland. On the Monday morning I went down to Croall's establishment at the back of the Castle, and told the man in charge that I required a horse for my show at the Empire.

"We've the very thing for you, Mr Lauder," was the reply, "an old cavalry horse with lots of mettle in him!"

I observed that I would have preferred a horse with lots of "metal" in its composition, but he didn't see my point, and then I added that I would like an animal that wouldn't be afraid of the music.

"This one positively loves music!" the head man assured me, and off we set to have a glance at him. To tell the truth, I didn't half care for the look of that horse, and when he turned round sweetly and

tried to bite a bit out of my leg my impression of him was not improved. However, this playful little action of his "raised my dander," and I resolved there and then to have him for the week, especially as I was assured that he was "really the quietest horse imaginable and didn't care a straw for all the bands at Edinburgh Castle!" The first night he behaved fairly well, the only suspicion of temper he evinced being to snap viciously at me as I "walked round" after the first verse of the song. He was a trifle spirited, too, in his exit, making a "breenge" for the wings, which sent the attendants and artistes scurrying for places of safety.

Next evening he began his cantrips in real earnest. He would do nothing that I wanted, refused to stand still, and generally behaved as if he had gone mad. The audience thought that I had trained him to the whole performance and shrieked with laughter as they watched the struggle I had to keep him in semi-subjection. Towards the finish he started to "back" in the direction of the footlights. I seized hold of the reins and pulled for all I was worth. The more I pulled the more he "backed." It was a terrible situation, but for the life of me I could not keep from laughing, and the people, seeing this, deemed the whole thing a glorious joke and simply rocked in their seats. When, however, the drummer in the orchestra looked up and saw my horse's tail swishing over his head, he made a precipitous retreat from his place, and his example was soon followed by several other members of the band and by the more nervous occupants of the stalls.

Soon the entire house was in an uproar. Those who were out of reach of all possible danger continued to scream with uncontrollable merriment, but the musicians and those in the front seats began to make a general stampede. My wife was a terrified spectator of the scene from the prompt side of the wings, and I could hear her shouting excitedly to the horse to "Woa-back there!" "This way, boy!" "Steady, you brute!" etc., etc. Just when it seemed a dead certainty that the war-horse would make a very undignified descent on to the big drum he looked round to see where he was going, so to speak, and after a moment or two of hesitation he sprang forward, knocked me down in the passing and dashed into the wings, foaming at the mouth. The curtain went down with a rush, the orchestra and the stall-holders gingerly resumed their places, and I had to answer half a dozen recalls for the most exciting performance ever I took part in.

Subsequently Mr Moss, who had viewed the incident from one of the boxes, sent for me and asked if I was prepared to pay for any damage my horse was likely to do during the rest of the week. I thought at first he was joking, but it was no joke on his part, and I had to sign a document agreeing to be responsible for any damage we might cause, singly or as a combination. This turn of affairs made me seriously consider the situation, and next day I secured a much more docile animal. Hundreds of people, however, turned up at the Empire that night specially to see "Harry Lauder's mad horse," and everybody—with the exception of the drummer—was quite disappointed at the tameness of my new steed.

"COORTIN' A FERMER'S DOCHTER"

A few weeks later I was at the People's Palace, Dundee, and the first horse I had there also made a name for himself in a small way. He began to tremble with nervousness every time he went on the stage, and the audiences were vastly amused to watch his limbs quivering like animated potted-head. Had this been his only fault I could have forgiven him, but—well, he demonstrated other eccentricities which compelled us to part after three nights' companionship!

CHAPTER IX

"THE FLYING SCOTSMAN"

FROM horses to motor-cars is quite a natural move. I am an ardent motorist and enjoy nothing better than a spin in one of my Decauvilles along the country lanes of Surrey, or, for that matter, along any open highway. Frequently I take my big car with me when on tour, and in this way I have pretty well motored all over England and Scotland. Many of my professional friends are expert drivers, but I could no more take a motor-car through the streets of London than I could fly over the house-tops.

I really think I'm a coward so far as driving a motor-car is concerned, for, apart from being a good passenger, the only other automobile part I can play at all decently is to use forcible language to 'bus-drivers and cabmen who get in our way between halls. Probably my antipathy to driving dates from the time, several years ago, when I made my first and only attempt to learn the mysteries of

the art. It was somewhere in South Wales. I had a nice little two-cylinder car then, and we were having a forenoon "reviver" on the outskirts of Cardiff or Swansea.—I really forget which. All of a sudden it occurred to me that I should learn to drive. My friends assured me that half the real pleasure of motoring lay in manipulating the little wheel and jerking the brass lever up and down! Why shouldn't I have a go at it?

Tom, my chauffeur, was not very keen on changing seats—he hinted to me afterwards that he knew what would happen—but latterly he agreed and away we started, going very slowly to begin with but giving her more petrol as I gained confidence. By-and-by a farmer's gig loomed up in front, going in the same direction as ourselves. Tom, at this stage, had the foresight to stretch over and reduce the supply of petrol. Waiting until the farmer was within earshot of my horn I squeezed out a couple of pip-pips. The trap drew to its proper side of the road, but I wanted to make an artistic sweep round it, and just as we came up behind I turned the steering wheel—the wrong way. Fortunately, we were not going very fast, but fast enough to send horse, trap, farmer and motor-car into a ditch at the roadside. The damage only amounted to about fifty pounds all told!

By the way, I've heard a fair amount of bad language in my time, but nothing to approach the exquisite phraseology of that Welsh farmer on crawling from beneath his upturned machine. Yet in a sense it was welcome, for it instantly

relieved my mind of hideous visions of "Lauder on trial for manslaughter!"

One evening my brougham broke down on the Embankment while I was hurrying from the Tivoli to a suburban hall in the south-west. It was a small mishap and at the most meant only a few minutes' delay, but I was nervous about being late for my turn and jumped out, forgetting for the instant that I was fully attired in kilt, glengarry, etc.—the swaggering corporal in "She's ma Daisy." Almost before I had reached the front of the car I was surrounded by a crowd of people—they seemed to materialise from nowhere—who started to shout the choruses of my songs with all the lustiness of lung they could muster. It was a ludicrous babel, for while some favoured the chorus most appropriate to the circumstances, others sung "Stop yer ticklin'," and others again joined vocal issue with "The Lass o' Killiecrankie."

A hoarse-voiced cabby who had drawn up alongside could be heard above the din recommending me to "give 'er a feed of 'ay, 'Arry, that's wot she wants!" By-and-by a couple of policemen strolled forward to see what was wrong, but instead of keeping the crowd back they smiled broadly on recognising me, and at once chirped in with the chorus that most strongly appealed to them. Soon the necessary repairs were effected and we moved away along the Embankment to the accompaniment of ringing cheers and shouts of "Good old 'Arry Laudah!"

When I am on the subject of motor-cars I may say that my Decauville and I have established what I

"THE MAN THEY LEFT BEHIND"

believe to be a record performance for London so far as working different halls the same evening is concerned. Just before I turned ill in the autumn of this year I was engaged on the Tivoli Syndicate of halls, and was also booked to appear at the Hammersmith Palace.

My times were mapped out by the Tivoli directors as follows:—Canterbury, nine o'clock; Metropolitan, Edgeware Road, nine forty-five, and Tivoli, ten twenty-five. Starting my night's work at the Canterbury I there gave an eighteen minutes' show, then ran, fully dressed, to my brougham and drove with all haste to the Metropolitan. Here I was on the stage for exactly twenty minutes, leaving me a quarter of an hour to cover the three miles between Edgeware Road and the Tivoli. Another twenty minutes' performance, finishing as nearly as may be at a quarter to eleven, gave me fully twenty minutes to reach the Hammersmith Palace, five miles away. Going on the stage here no later than ten minutes past eleven I completed my full evening's toil inside two and a half hours. Singing eight songs, changing from head to foot twelve times, and driving fully a dozen miles in two and a half hours is what I call hustling and no mistake! As I have said this performance is a record one so far as I am aware.

Many artistes, myself included, have worked five and six halls a night, but this means starting early in the evening with much more time to spare between the different houses. Without a motor-brougham, skilfully handled by an expert chauffeur—one who knows his London like a book—such a night's work

as I have outlined would be quite impossible. What about breakdowns, did you say? Personally I never dream of such horrible contingencies, and so far, I am very glad to say, I have had no experience of real accident and never once been more than a minute or two late for an engagement, thanks to the iron-nerved Tom and my sweet-running Decauville!

CHAPTER X

A "DEAD" SHOT

ALTHOUGH London now claims a great portion of my year I have still to do a fair amount of travelling. Frankly, I like being on tour, because if one has the faculty of making friends in different places one can contrive to extract a deal of enjoyment from occasional runs round the principal towns in the provinces. Wherever I go my friends are exceedingly kind to me, and I am never threatened with "dowieness." Some time ago I was fulfilling an engagement at Newcastle —where I play in pantomime this Christmas—and one of my friends, who has a shooting on the outskirts of the city, asked me if I would care to have an afternoon's sport with him. I said that I would be delighted to go out, but added that he needn't be afraid of my clearing out the game on his preserves.

"What can we shoot, Mr A——?" asked I, "deer, or bears, or tigers, or what?"

"Nothing so exciting," he replied with a smile, "but if you would like a pop at the hares and rabbits I'll guarantee you good sport."

Now, I had never shot a rabbit in my life, and I must confess that I looked forward to this afternoon's "stalking" with considerable fear and trembling. However, next day I drove out to Mr A——'s place, and, after arming ourselves for the fray, we started on the shooting expedition. We were accompanied by my friend's gamekeeper, to whom I kept very close, and into whose ear I whispered more than once that I hoped he would stand by me in my hour of need and see that I did nothing desperate with my gun.

The "gamie" was awfu' nice and said he was certain I would have a good "bag." I replied that he was more hopeful on that point than I was myself. Soon we came to a hedge at the other side of which was a small field. Mr A—— whisperingly called a halt and asked me if I was all ready.

"Yes," said I, "I'm ready, but I don't ken what for!"

"Hish!" whispered John, the gamekeeper, "that field over the hedge is a favourite spot with the young rabbits! Creep up very slowly, sir, peep over the hedge and let fly at them!"

Trembling with excitement I did as I was told, slowly advancing to the hedge with a crouching movement and then peeping over the bank in the most cautious fashion. Sure enough, the little field was dotted with rabbits. At the foot of a big tree, not twenty yards away from where I stood, a family of about a dozen fair-sized "bunnies" appeared to my unpractised eye to be peacefully munching. I up with my gun, aimed for the middle of the group of

"PIPER M'FARLANE"

rabbits, closed my eyes, and pulled both triggers. When the smoke had cleared away—and when I had been assisted to my feet by the gamekeeper and Mr A——, I asked breathlessly if I had shot anything.

"Shot anything!" quickly responded my host. "I'm sure you've killed half a dozen and frightened the others to death! There, look! Rabbits can't run when they're really frightened—if you hurry up you'll bag the lot," and he pointed over the hedge, where I certainly saw quite a number of the original group still in the same place.

"Well, that's funny," said I, "the silly beasties are fair terror-struck! Here goes for another plug at them," and I fired several more shots in quick succession. My suspicions were roused, however, when I observed that the leaden fire left the rabbit-school in exactly the same position as when I had first seen it, and a quick glance at Mr A——'s face revealed the fact that he was doing his utmost to suppress a burst of laughter. As for the "gamie," his back was turned towards me and his whole frame was heaving in silent mirth.

I only recollected at that instant that my friend Mr A—— was a notorious practical joker. Jumping over the hedge I ran to the foot of the tree where the motionless rabbits were still lying, and discovered, right enough, that I had been blazing away at dead rabbits carefully placed there for my special benefit.

"Well, Harry, I guaranteed you a good kill, didn't I?" asked my friend, as we strolled up to the house.

"I wish I could guarantee you six months!" was all I said in reply.

As I have remarked somewhere before one story leads naturally to another, and mention of my rabbit-shooting experience at Newcastle recalls an incident indirectly connected therewith which was highly amusing in its own way. Probably in return for the "rise" which my Tyneside friend had taken out of me on this sporting expedition he presented me with a very fine bull terrier. "Bob" was an exceedingly likeable animal, and as he and I instantly became friends I resolved, instead of sending him home to London, to take him with me to Scotland.

Aberdeen was my next town after Newcastle, and on the Monday morning "Bob" and I travelled together to the far north. On previous visits to Aberdeen I had lodged with a tailor and his wife, and as the "digs" were more than comfortable I arranged to go back on this occasion. The landlady was delighted to see me again, and on my inquiring how "Elec"—as we will call him—was behaving, she replied that he was "daein' awfu' weel; been as sober's a judge for three weeks!"

I congratulated her on her husband's unusual term of sobriety, and later in the day the tailor himself came home looking very spruce and respectable.

"An' ye've brocht a dog wi' ye this time, Harry," he observed, in the broad Aberdeen doric, looking down at "Bob," who was snoring on the rug in front of my room fire. "I'll gie him a walk oot the nicht when ye're at the Palace," he added.

I willingly agreed to his suggestion for I could not very well take "Bob" with me. The tailor and I

left the house about seven o'clock, the former leading the dog by means of a stout string. At the corner of Union Street and Market Street we parted till later in the evening. It was nearly midnight when I got home, and the first sound I heard on entering the house was the voice of the landlady evidently raised in anger against her loving spouse. The dog was in neither of my rooms, so I walked into the kitchen, and there a most ludicrous spectacle met my eyes. The landlord was sitting on the floor as "fou"—well, "as fou's a tiler"—his arms encircled "Bob's" neck, and into the dog's ear he was breathing epithets of the most loving and tender description, the while his wife relieved herself of some very pointed remarks concerning her husband's conduct.

"I dinna ken far oor 'Elec' got the drink," she exclaimed to me aside, "for he had only tippence fan he gaed oot wi' you. It's a fair puzzle till me," and I could certainly see that she was puzzled.

To cut a long story short, "Elec," soon after leaving me, had met a few of his pals, and their interest in "Harry Lauder's dog" was so strong that an adjournment to a "pub" was the only course open to the company under the circumstances. "Elec" soon realised the good thing he had got hold of. He did no more work that week, but about seven o'clock every night left the house with "Bob" and was never seen till after "closing time." How he managed to bring "Bob" safely home every night was an even greater mystery than how he got home himself! On the Monday morning following he told me with a solemn face that he was "verra sorry I wis gae'in

awa," but that he was " fair hert-broken tae pairt wi' 'Bob.'" It took me several weeks after I left Aberdeen to impress on " Bob " that I did not like the habit he had acquired in the Granite City of stopping at every public-house door we came to!

CHAPTER XI

SONGS AND SONG-WRITERS

But I must sheer off the story-telling tack, and pass on to give my readers some information of a more personal nature. I have no doubt you will want to know something about the writing and composing of the many songs I have sung in public during the past few years. I am frequently asked where I get my ideas for the different songs I sing. Well, I have no desire to " blow ma' ain horn," as we say in Scotland, but to be quite truthful I must admit the soft impeachment and confess that the majority of those ideas are my own.

Wherever I go, especially when north of the Border, I am always on the alert for anything that will suggest " fresh business," and the slightest idea that occurs to me is at once noted down in a huge scrap-book which I keep for this express purpose and in which I have been jotting down all sorts of odds and ends for several years. The volume is now tattered and torn; there are few blank pages left in it, and, if I must make a confession, a good deal of the scribbling is now so much Greek to me. I must have known what it meant when I wrote it, but to save my neck

I could not now give a lucid explanation of all the strange fragments contained in this wonderful book.

At the same time I have got hold of more than one good song through my habit of jotting down casual ideas. For instance, I was walking through the streets in the West End of London one day and observed, wherever I went, advertisements of a play called *The Last of the Dandies*. All at once the idea flashed across me—why not write a Scotch character song entitled " The Last of the Sandies "? Out came my book and down went the suggestion. I forgot all about it until some weeks later when I was spending a quiet half-hour in the company of my precious scrap-book. Then I noticed the suggestion. Unconsciously I began to string together some lines of verse suitable to the idea, and in this way was " The Last of the Sandies " launched upon an unoffending public. In arranging the words of this song I had the assistance of an old Glasgow friend, Mr R. Beaton, who has also collaborated with me in several other songs, including " The Saftest o' the Family." Many of my other songs have been written under similar conditions. Sometimes the " muse " is kind to me and I am able to commit a whole verse to writing straight off, but there are occasions when the rhyming faculty deserts me altogether and then I have just to wait patiently till it returns. My wife tells me that my head is so much taken up with business and " daffin' " that I can think of nothing else. Probably she is right, but I can't help myself. It's my nature!

I remember waking up early one morning, and as

"RODERICK M'SWANKEY"—MY FIRST PANTOMIME CHARACTER

I lay in bed half-dozing the idea suddenly occurred to me that a good song could be written round the horrors of having to get up early. I had experienced the full force of this painful business as a miner in Lanarkshire, and, lying there in my cosy bed, I began to throw together a few ideas more or less bearing on the feelings of a man who has no great desire to be "up in the mornin' early." Soon I was wide awake, my thinking apparatus going for all it was worth. By-and-by I became so interested in my thoughts that I roused my wife with the remark, "Nance, I've got a rare idea for a new song."

Now Mrs Lauder is generally only too willing to act the part of critic where any ideas of my own are concerned, but on this occasion she gave me a thump in the ribs and sternly ordered me to go to sleep. "It's a terrible business, Harry Lauder," she exclaimed, "if you're no to get a decent night's rest for thinkin' about new songs. Your songs'll be the death o' you yet!" I had just to make a show of going to sleep—there's no use arguing under such circumstances—but the result of my musings in bed upon that occasion was the popular ditty, "Risin' early in the Mornin'," which I wrote in collaboration with "Sandy" Melville of Glasgow.

"Tobermory" was suggested to me while standing on Gourock pier watching an excursion steamer leaving for the west coast. Among the passengers were two Glasgow men who were evidently setting out on a holiday. They were both "well on," and each was waving a bottle of whisky in farewell to his friends on shore. A comical couple they looked.

One was always addressing the other as "Mac," and just as the steamer sailed "Mac" yelled out, "We'll fairly knock them up at Tobermory." The remark stuck to me, and shortly thereafter Mr Tom Glen (Dundee) and I produced "Tobermory."

One of my very latest successes, "I love a Lassie," or "My Scotch Bluebell," had its origin in a very simple way. Two years ago I was leaving the Palace, Manchester, after finishing my turn, when a letter from my wife was handed to me by one of the attendants.

"A lady's handwriting, Harry!" jocularly said the attendant. "I suppose you love the lassies?"

"I'm fond o' them a'," I replied, "but I only love yin."

On my way home that evening I began to hum the words "I love a Lassie," and some time afterwards my good friend, Mr Gerald Grafton, collaborated with me in writing the song which I am singing at the present time. In addition to the gentlemen I have named I keep in close touch with Mr J. D. Harper (Glasgow) and several other clever song-writers. Whenever they strike on an idea for a song that they think will suit me they send me a rough draft of the words they propose, leaving me to alter them if I think fit. If the subject is one that appeals to me I at once accept the song, even although I may not see my way to make use of it for a long time to come. The author's treatment of the central idea, too, may be all wrong from my point of view; still, if I am satisfied with the subject I do not hesitate to come to terms.

I have more than once bought a song from a writer

and so altered the whole composition that the author himself scarcely recognised it when I put it "on." At the same time I frankly admit that I have secured many good songs from different authors all over the country, and in some cases they have so coincided with my own ideas that scarcely a word had to be altered from start to finish. As already mentioned I have collaborated with several writers both in London and in Scotland, with the most satisfactory results, and I am under no small obligations to these either for the original ideas or for the elaborating of suggestions provided by myself.

My readers would scarcely believe the quantity of songs that are submitted to me for perusal in the course of a year. Every post brings them from every part of the country. Some are good, many are middling, but hundreds are, well—as Bailie Nicol Jarvie says, "We'll let that flea stick to the wa'!" And not one out of fifty is at all suited to my particular style! The instant I cast my eye over verses submitted to me in this way I know whether or not they are any good—you see, I have so studied my public that I know exactly, or flatter myself that I know, what sort of fare they expect from me. Frequently of a morning I will tell my wife that I want her to listen to a few of the more likely songs I have laid aside for further consideration.

"Very good," she will probably reply, "but hurry up, for I want to bake scones the day." Then I start and read over the manuscripts, keeping a corner of my eye upon her to see the effect. If, after the first line or two, she quietly murmurs,

"No bad!" I proceed; if she then gives an "Imphm" or two, I also proceed—but more slowly; the instant she says "Stop yer ticklin'" I toss the song aside as hopeless.

Some "authors" send me long and appealing letters with their compositions. One chap in Lancashire has pestered me for years with songs which have neither rhyme, reason nor anything else in them. The first time he sent me a song—a terrible production it was too!—he wrote that I was at liberty to set the words to music and sing the song on condition that I paid him one guinea every time I sang it in public. I replied thanking him for his very generous offer, but hinted that the song was no good to any man who valued his life while on the stage. A few months later he sent me another song, a shade worse than the first, if that were possible, but the terms were now reduced to fifteen shillings every time I sang his masterpiece. He also got that song back by the next post. Since then I have had periodical communications from my Lancashire friend, and the last time I heard from him he was offering me a "grand new song," which I could purchase outright for "five bob, cash down." I sent him the five shillings, put his song in the fire, and am thankful to say that up to date his handwriting has been missing from my correspondence.

Ladies send me songs as well as the members of the other sex, but, ungallant as it may seem to my lady friends, I must say that I have not yet come across a suitable song from the pen of a "bonnie lassie." Once a young Devonshire girl—I am certain

she was both young and beautiful though I never saw her—sent me a few verses which she "was sure would make a fine song in my kilt"—whatever that might mean. The song I threw away, but the letter I left lying on the dining-room table, and it very nearly got me into domestic trouble, for the writer went on to say that "she had loved me ever since she saw me." My explanations to Mrs Lauder were fortunately considered satisfactory!

"Your songs are good, Lauder," I'm often told, "your singing of them is better still, but your music fairly gets there every time!" It would be mere affectation on my part to say that I am not proud of many of the melodies which I have introduced to the British public, and for that matter to the English-speaking race all over the world. It would be equally out of place were I to deny that the success of my songs has been due in great measure to the music to which the words are wedded. The song itself stands for a great deal, the acting of the character to be portrayed is more important still, but the greatest factor of all in the success of a popular song is its melody. I never had a music lesson in my life, and if I can nowadays pick out a harmony on the piano, that is about the utmost limit of my practical powers as a musician. Yet since ever I can remember I have "aye been hummin'" at some lilt or another.

Whenever I compose, or get submitted to me, a few good lines of verse I am not content until I have found a melody to fit them. Then I sit down at the piano and strum away until I have a more or less

"WE PARTED ON THE SHORE"

clear idea of the lines on which the melody is to run. Often I seem to strike on the exact thing right away, and then I am so delighted with myself that I keep lilting over the melody for hours, ay, and days at a time, until, in fact, my better-half wearily asks me to give the household a little peace. I have a wonderfully quick ear and seldom forget a tune after I have hummed it over several times and satisfied myself that it is a good one. I know nothing at all about the principles of orchestration, but I have only to hear one of my own pieces played for the first time by an orchestra to put my hand on any weak spot and suggest what I think should be altered, cut out or amplified. It is almost needless for me to add that I never put on a new song until I have gone over it hundreds of times in private and thoroughly satisfied myself that it is up to high-water mark.

When I am in my ordinary health and spirits I devote an hour or two every day to practice, and at present I am studying several good character songs which I hope to produce as opportunity arises. With at least three of these songs I am very much in love, and if I am spared I fancy I can see them becoming as popular as any of my previous efforts. One of the trio I refer to I wrote and composed during my holiday tour in the Highlands this autumn. As a matter of fact, the central idea occurred to me while sailing up the Argyllshire coast on one of the Clyde passenger steamers, and before I went to bed in Oban that night I had not only completed the words but had evolved what my friends will term "a characteristic melody" to suit them. It would

hardly be fair to pass from the musical side of my business without a recognition of the invaluable assistance which I receive at home. My wife and son are untiring and devoted in the aid which they lend by presiding at the piano while I am working out new themes or knocking into proper shape some of the melodies which have been running through my head from time to time. The fact that on such occasions I am inclined to be very irritable and ill-tempered—so I am told at all events—says a great deal for their good-nature.

CHAPTER XII

SNIPS FROM MY LETTER-BAG

My friends assert that I am one of the worst correspondents on earth. My wife goes a step further and says that I am absolutely the worst. So that between the two statements you have a fair idea of how I stand in this respect. Perhaps, however, it's just as well for me, because were I to answer all the letters that reach me in the course of a week I would require to keep a couple of secretaries and spend half of each day—and all Sunday—superintending their labours. I am firmly of opinion that a successful comedian's letter-bag is the most weird and wonderful collection of epistles ever penned, typewritten or printed to plague the life out of a suffering mortal.

Every time I hear the postman's knock I feel a kind of cold shiver running down my back. I remember the days when I eagerly looked forward to

the "postie's" visits as generally representing a guinea engagement to sing at some local "cookie-shine," or the offer of a six-weeks' tour at thirty-five shillings a week. But in these days he brought no hateful income tax schedules, no begging letters from every charitable organisation in the kingdom, no piteous appeals for money from people whose names I never saw before nor heard of, and no long-winded "screeds" from stage-struck men and women imploring my aid to set them on the highway to fame and fortune. Yes, the penny post is more of a nuisance than a blessing, and I would abolish it to-morrow if I could!

Some of the letters I receive from people with a notion to go on the stage are decidedly funny. Only the other day I got a letter from a young man in the north of Scotland, who commenced by boldly stating that "after much consideration I have resolved to go on the stage." Would I tell him exactly how to proceed in the matter; what line of business would I advise him to follow; what music-hall could he get a start in, and—of course—what salary would he ask to begin with? "I'm a rare singer," he proceeded, "and if I could only get a few good songs like yourself I am sure I would do first class." I wrote a line or two in reply stating that so far as I could hear there were no really good openings just then, but that I would keep him in mind whenever I heard of one.

My north-country correspondent was certainly cool in his requests, but not nearly so icy as the writer of the following letter from Liverpool. "Dear

"I LOVE A LASSIE"—*THE* LASSIE

Harry,—You don't know me but I know you, for I heard you three times at the Empire last week. You're great! I want to learn your songs just as you sing them yourself, but I can't get the patter. Will you please write it out for all your songs and send it on to me at once? If you agree to do this for me I will send you five shillings for your trouble. Since hearing you last week I have determined to be a comedian, so if you have any songs handy which you have no use for, you can send them along with the patter." My Liverpool friend is still waiting for the "patter."

Last year, when at the Glasgow Empire, I got a letter from a man in Dunfermline. He was very flattering in his opening remarks—so much so that I said to myself, "I wonder what's comin'." But I was hardly prepared for what did come. "I'm singing your songs all round the shop"—I give my correspondent's exact words—"and they tell me that I can sing them better than you can yourself—jist as good onywey. I hiv some good mak-ups, but no a kilt. Could you len' me wan for a month or two—I am sure you would not miss it, because you must have more than wan."

I paid no attention to this letter, but a few days afterwards I received a note from the young man's mother asking me as a great favour not to "keep up a correspondence with her Hughie, because he was a wee bit 'saft' and her only support." She had heard that he had "wrote me to become a comic singer on the stage, which she hoped I would not encourage him!"

Still another stage-struck loon sent me the following letter some time ago: "Harry, Old Chap"—he began,—"I do wish you would assist a struggling comic like what you was yourself not so long since ago. I have a good voice but I am never rid of the cold as I work in a brickfield all day, and I want to go on the stage and be something like yourself in your own line of business if you will only get me a job. I am thirty-seven years old, strong as a lion, not married, and don't intend to keep any man's daughter. Please reply at once, Harry, Old Chap, and I will do as much for you some day."

I could not help laughing at this extraordinary letter. It was too good to pay no attention to, so I sat down and wrote in reply: "Peter, Old Chap"—Peter was his name,—"when you get the New Year holidays over you should go and join the Templars. —Yours truly, Harry, Old Chap."

I would like very much to tell you about some of the letters I have received from ladies—especially young girls who want to face the footlights—but here I am on delicate ground, and as my wife will probably read these rambling memoirs I think the best plan will be to skip this part of the business altogether! It must not be imagined, however, that all my correspondence is made up of such letters as I have referred to in the opening words of this chapter and of epistles such as I have quoted. Life would not be worth living if that were the case. I get many nice letters from admirers in different parts of the country. Why they should write to me I really don't know, but I am always glad to hear

from them, because the man does not exist in any profession who does not like to know that his efforts are appreciated. Only a few days ago I received the following letter from Westcliffe-on-Sea:—

"DEAR HARRY LAUDER,—I canna resist sending you twa wee bitties o' Scotch heather, ane for yersel' and the ither for your bonnie, bonnie lassie fair as the lily in the dell. I was ance a Scotch lassie masel', but I am noo sixty-five years auld and can still enjoy hearing you sing your tuneful sangs in the pure Scottish accent. Mony years hae gone by since I left ma native heather hills, but O I hae a coothie corner in ma hert for dear auld Scotland. I hope you'll pardon the liberty I hae ta'en in writing you, but I felt after hearing 'Ma Scotch Bluebell' on Wednesday night that I must tell you of a 'grannie's' delight at your performance. The tears cam' tae ma een as I listened to your hamely tongue. Lang may you be spared to delight an English audience! *P.S.*—The heather cam' frae Strathpeffer this mornin'."

The following "swatches o' rhyme" came from an old friend in Rutherglen:—

"Wha wadna gang an' hear the famous Harry Lauder?
Ma grannie heard him sing last nicht, and noo ye canna haud her.
The wey he jumped and jooked aboot, jist like a perfect wuddie,
I ne'er in a' ma born days saw sic a funny body.

Harry, I'm gled, mán, that you've ta'en the bun,
By pleasin' John Bull wi' yer side-splittin' fun,
And when ye come hame may ye never dae less
Than tak' the front rank wi' tremendous success.

O, Harry, ye arena' tae bide lang awa',
For Scotland, ye ken, canna want ye ava'.
We hav'na' anither wha bears the same name,
Sae hist ye up, Harry, an' come awa' hame!"

I hope my readers will not put me down as a conceited fool for publishing "poetic" outbursts of this character, but I feel that I may as well let you have them, seeing I have written so much about myself. Here is a Glasgow man's rhyming tribute:—

"Lauder, king o' jest an' sang!
Lauder brings a michty thrang!
Lauder's here, a welcome boon,
Lauder's dear tae Glesca' toon,
Lauder's loved roon' ilka hearth,
Lauder stands for Scottish mirth,
Lauder's fame's flewn far an' wide,
Lauder's name's noo 'Scotland's Pride'!"

A London admirer, signing himself "Davoc," recently sent me a long "poem" written in my honour. I would have liked to print it in full, because the production, apart altogether from the flattering references to myself, is a clever bit of rhyming. However, I will only give you one or two extracts. "Davoc" begins:—

"Fair Scotia's muse, the fickle jade,
At times will tak' me by the hand,
And then she'll jist refuse the aid
That I, in modesty, demand.
She'll spread her mantle o'er me, then
I feel inspired to sweetly write.
Anon, her servant she'll nae ken,
An' a' my invocations slight!
'Tis jist sae noo—I want to sing
Yer praises when the chance occurs,
But aff she's gane!—the sousie thing—
To some mair favoured freen' o' hers."

Then followed several more laudatory stanzas about myself and my songs, but I have some slight suspicion of modesty left and the verses are altogether too flattering for publication.

"Davoc" concludes as follows:—

"Sae noo farewell, my funny friend,
I've drunk yer health in Bass's O,
To happiness yer life should trend,
For O ye please the lasses O!"

I am not so sure, "Davoc," that "pleasin' the lasses O" is a certain way to happiness, but I can assure you that I've always done my best in this direction!!!

CHAPTER XIII

"BREAKING THE RECORD"

Now I'm nearly finished! If you are sorry, reader, I'm glad; if you are glad, then I'm sorry. But seeing that I don't know whether you are sorry or glad I will have to obey the orders of my publisher and add a few remarks about what he calls "my home life." If that is really of the slightest interest to you—which I don't for a moment believe—I can quite easily tell you lots of highly sensational things, as, for instance, that I leave my bed in the morning when I am tired sleeping, that I shave every day by means of a razor and soap-suds, that I am awfu' fond o' a kipper to my breakfast and scones to my tea, that I sometimes have a row with the wife, and that I'm the greatest man in the world for breaking or losing collar-studs!

I could also tell you that I spend a good part of the day attired in little else than shirt and "troosers," that when I'm not smoking a pipe I'm smoking a cigar, that all my friends are welcome to visit me at any moment of the day, and that I hate "ceremony" in any shape or form with all my heart.

A Scotsman's house, they say, is his castle. My castle is a very modest villa out Tooting way, and I'm never so truly happy as when at home in the bosom of my wife and "one family." On these occasions one or the other of us is seldom far away from the piano—and I often think it's a good job that we live in a self-contained house! At rare times, too, I take out my bagpipes and have a "skirl." Then a crowd collects in front of the house and the traffic is held up until I have "blawn till there's no a blaw left in me." There are a couple of gramophones about the house somewhere, and mention of this reminds me that I have not told you my experiences the first time I sang for one of the big companies. I was ushered into the "recording-room" and placed in front of an enormous "receiver."

When the orchestra and the operator were all ready I was told to "fire away." I proceeded to "fire." I managed the first verse all right and then sprang my first "gag." But I forgot where I was and waited for the applause. Deep stillness reigned supreme! I couldn't help it—I burst out laughing and fell off the stool on which I had been placed to bring my mouth up to the level of the receiver. The operator rushed out from his box, the musicians screamed with merriment—and the record was spoiled.

"This is the daftest thing I ever did," I remarked on scrambling to my feet. "Fancy singin' a sang into a big tin tube! Look here," I said to the manager, who was standing by holding his sides, "hoo much am I to get for this, because there's nae use o' bein' daft if yer no to be well peyed for't?"

There was more laughter all round, and then I was told that my fee would be—well, the figure was all right, mind I'm tellin' ye!

"Ca' awa'," said I, "I'm yer man."

The next record was a great success. I have since sang hundreds of times into the gramophone and phonograph, but I always remember the day that I fell off the stool!

One way or another I dabble a good deal in photography, although I sometimes think that my expenditure in this line is a long way more than the results justify. Even yet I have an awkward habit of making two exposures on the same film, of attempting to develop my best negatives with hypo, or of forgetting them altogether after making certain that they are placed in the proper bath. More by luck than good guidance I sometimes manage to get a very passable photograph. Then I am as proud of myself as a bantam-cock, and all the friends I meet for the next day or two have to answer the query, "What dae ye think o't?"

I golf a wee bit, but have not yet reached the stage of having my backyard laid out as a putting-green. I make a practice of never playing with anybody that I don't think I can beat. This means that I play very seldom. When I do go out, my trail can easily be

traced on the course by the bald patches on the turf and the remains of broken clubs. I used to have a very high opinion of golfers as a class, but an incident that happened when I was in Scotland a few weeks ago rather soured my gentle and thoroughly sportsman-like nature.

My old Glasgow friend, Bailie Thomson, and I were having a round on the Ralston Links at Paisley. Now I never thought "the Bilie" was a man like that, but at the second or third hole, he deliberately accused me of kicking my ball out of a nasty rut. I certainly stumbled against the ball with the inside of my right foot, but nothing was further from my thoughts than the idea of securing a better "lie!"

I protested strongly against the Bailie's vile insinuation, but nothing I could say had any impression on him and we finished the round in dignified silence. The affair so upset me that I went clean off my game and was five holes down at the eighteenth. In the clubhouse later I casually mentioned to my opponent that I had had an "awfu' sair back a' day," and was quite disgusted at the outburst of hilarity with which he received the information. But wait till I meet you again, Wullie! Perhaps your eyesight will not be so keen, and if I don't whack you I'll chuck golf for ever—or play with blind men!

Sometimes I am induced to play billiards, and on my own table at home I have actually been known, when in deadly form, to run up a break of six or thereabouts. I am a great supporter of the all-in game and never play "nomination." My keenest

enemy at the table is my own son John, and we have many a desperate tussle. John is a much better player than I am, but he can't hit the balls so hard and therefore does not get the "extras" that come my way. One of the proudest moments of my life was when I made a magnificent ten-shot in one of our frequent matches for the Lauder Championship. I cannoned off the red and all the balls disappeared like lightning into the pockets. "Did you mean that, pa?" asked John, with a gasp. "Certainly I did," was my reply as I executed a "back step" round the table. Then John looked at me wistfully for a second or two and limply laid down his cue. That ten-shot had won the game!

I'm at the end o' ma tether; I maun stop. "Thank goodness!" I can hear some of my readers say, but if they only knew how the remark hurts me they would not pass it. I have told you everything that I think will be of any interest to you, and a lot, I'm afraid, that will be of no interest at all. However, I have done my best and I hope I have not altogether "done" you. So much for the story of Harry Lauder's life; when he comes to die all that he will ask for will be a tartan-draped hearse and a band of pipers in front playing "The Land o' the Leal" and "Will ye no come Back Again?"

THE END

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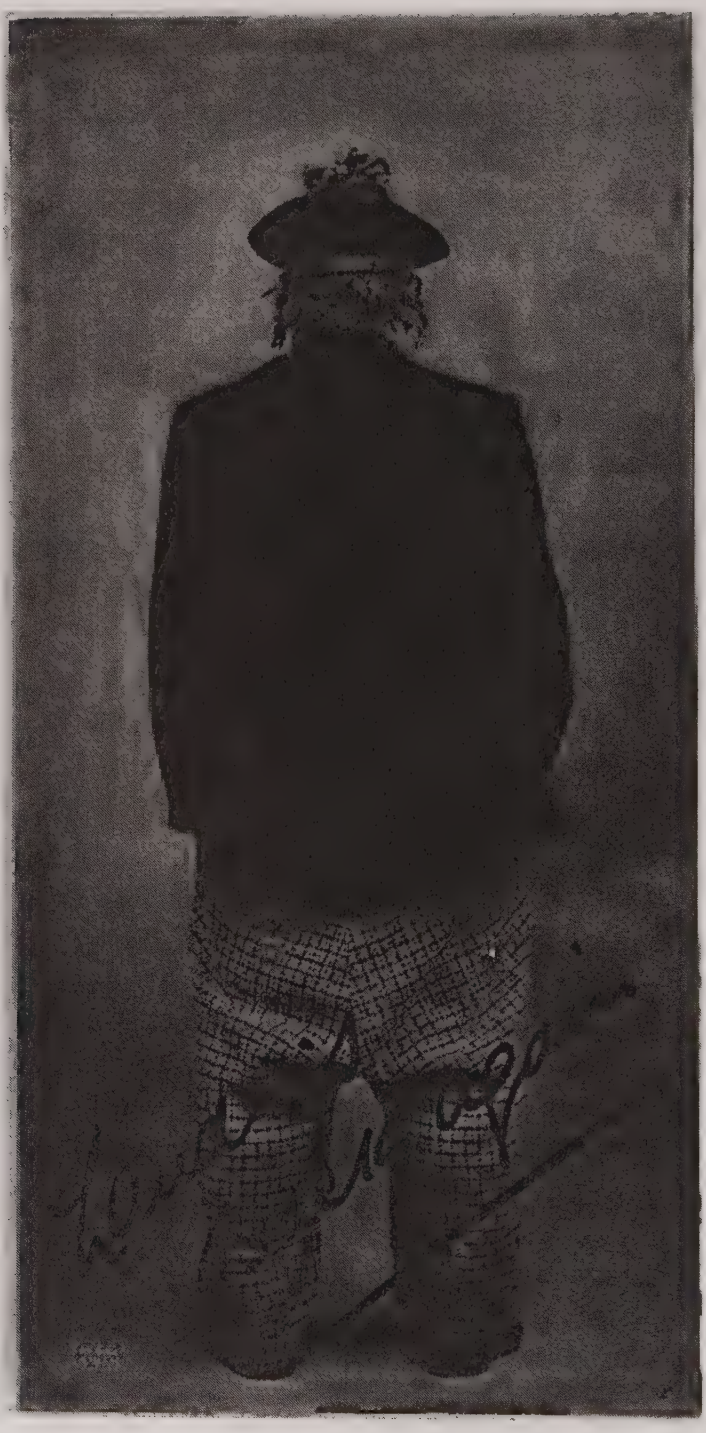

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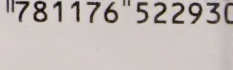

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